

“TO BE NATURAL . . . IS SUCH A DIFFICULT POSE TO KEEP UP”:
ELOCUTION’S EXTENDED DÉNOUEMENT, A CASE FOR THE REVIVAL OF
THOMAS SHERIDAN’S SINCERE PERFORMER IN CONTEMPORARY ENGLISH
STUDIES

A Thesis

by

LINDSAY ALEXANDRA SNODGRASS

Submitted to the Office of Graduate Studies of
Texas A&M University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

MASTER OF ARTS

May 2012

Major Subject: English

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ABSTRACT

“To be natural . . . is such a difficult pose to keep up”: Elocution’s Extended
Dénouement, a Case for the Revival of Thomas Sheridan’s Sincere Performer in
Contemporary English Studies. (May 2012)

Lindsay Alexandra Snodgrass, B.A., California State University, Sacramento

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This thesis analyzes elocutionary theory and practice on a national, literary, and individual level, placing emphasis on the ways in which the eighteenth century treatises of elocutionist Thomas Sheridan address, and ultimately promote, speaking as both a public (or performative) and private (or authentic) act. Moreover, the thesis extends a consideration of the impact of elocutionary theory on various historical moments throughout the eighteenth, nineteenth, twentieth and twenty-first centuries, respectively. Beginning with the works of elocutionist Thomas Sheridan and concluding with an analysis of recent pedagogical theories and narratives within the field of composition studies, this thesis also defines the impact of Sheridan’s theories on the construction of Irish national identity. It presents nineteenth and twentieth-century Irish theatre as a compelling case study in order to argue that performance—a key theoretical concept in elocutionary theory—remains essential to the study and investigation of voice in the contemporary English classroom.

Focusing on the dramatic works of Oscar Wilde, George Bernard Shaw and Brian Friel, this thesis contends that Irish drama, in addition to presenting a forceful illustration of the ways in which Sheridan's elocutionary theories have been adapted and challenged on the national and civic level, provides current scholars access to recent dramatic representations of authenticity and voice as well as the virtues/pitfalls of performativity. Wilde, Shaw and Friel specifically present linguistic performance as a process of negotiation and exchange, using the stage to reflect and construct Irish national and civic identity. Each playwright offers a lens through which to reevaluate ongoing debates over language acquisition, particularly as such debates arise within the context of composition studies. Through a careful examination of elocutionary theory and its various influences across a variety of historical moments, this study encourages contemporary composition scholars and pedagogues to reconsider the role of authenticity and performance within the writing classroom, prompting students and teachers to explore writing as an expression of both the public and private self. In doing so, this thesis argues that scholars and teachers will become better equipped to address discussions of voice, authenticity and performance in their writing classrooms.

DEDICATION

To my Mom and Dad

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION: THOMAS SHERIDAN'S EXTENDED DÉNOUEMENT

This study seeks to reassert the influence of eighteenth century elocutionary theory on contemporary discussions of writing and voice through a close and careful analysis of various forms of personal and performative discourse in a national, literary and individual context, spanning the eighteenth, nineteenth, twentieth and twenty-first centuries, respectively. Beginning with the elocutionary treatises and lectures of Thomas Sheridan and concluding with recent personal narratives in the field of composition studies, this thesis also explores nineteenth and twentieth century Irish theatre as a case study of the ways in which eighteenth century elocutionary theory extends to contemporary debates over the nature of “authentic” and performative voice. Placing the dramatic works of Oscar Wilde, George Bernard Shaw and Brian Friel in dialogue with elocutionary theory and practice, this thesis argues for the limited revival of elocutionary theory in contemporary English studies, asserting that elocution, while no doubt a problematic theory, maintains a vital role in the exploration of linguistic identity as a process of negotiation and exchange, a point well exemplified in the narrative works of Gloria Anzaldúa, Keith Gilyard, and Jacqueline Jones Royster. Ultimately, this thesis contends that an analysis of these narratives, combined with a look at three dramatic case studies as well as a close and careful examination of the elocutionary movement and its influence on discussions of voice, autonomy and national identity reveal a decidedly

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complex inter-relationship between current writing classrooms, nineteenth and twentieth century Irish drama, and eighteenth century views of language and learning. This relationship, when explored pedagogically, suggests to scholars and educators new and fruitful ways to address voice, “authentic” and academic discourse, and performativity within the context of the writing classroom.

Though eighteenth century elocutionary doctrine offers numerous voices and theories on the correct methods of oratory, Thomas Sheridan presents an important case study of the tensions that exist between the public and private self, and, through his interpretations of elocution—particularly in relation to views of sincere performativity—presents a possible solution to this seemingly irresolvable conflict. In his text, *A Course of Lectures on Elocution: 1762*, Sheridan defines elocution simply as “the just and graceful management of the voice, countenance, and gesture in speaking” (*Lectures* 19) all of which rely on the speaker’s “Pronunciation: Accent: Emphasis: Tones or Notes of the speaking voice: Pauses or Stops: Key or Pitch, and Management of the voice” (*Lectures* 19). For many critics, this perspective works to define Sheridan’s communicative theories as “mechanical” (Vandraegen 58), or theatrical, and therefore artificial. Yet, while Sheridan seems to present elocution as a simple process of practiced articulation—a mere matter of learning and imitating the proper forms of speech and gesture (and performing each accordingly)—a careful study of Sheridan’s treatises on education and elocution suggests that, despite the ease with which Sheridan defines his rhetorical doctrine, elocutionary theory, particularly under Sheridan, refuses to be confined in such simplistic terms. Rather, under the treatises and lectures of Sheridan,

eighteenth-century elocutionary theory seeks not only to reconstruct the “countenance” of the speaker but to establish a new communicative medium through the process of sincere performativity.

While Sheridan’s theory remains focused on his insistence that “good men” (*British Education* 13) learn to speak according to the “polite pronunciation of the court” (*Lectures* 30), Daniel E. Vandraegen asserts that Sheridan does not mean this process of imitation to override the internal demands of the speaker. Rather, according to Vandraegen, Sheridan “praises individuality and sincerity of communication when he declares that ‘he who speaks from his heart, can never fall into any absurdity in his manner; this is what they only are liable to, who adopt the manner of another’” (Sheridan qtd. Vandraegen 61). For Sheridan, audience approval is merely one aspect of the speaker’s authority since performance becomes, in many ways, essential to the speaker’s self-evaluation and growth. Specifically, Sheridan argues that linguistic authenticity and performance (two horns on the same goat as far as Sheridan is concerned) both stem from the speaker’s adeptness at processing the needs of the audience in *conjunction with* the “immediate sentiments of his [or her] own mind” (*Lectures* 70), a process that enables the speaker to effectively communicate and/or perform sincerity and naturalness for his or her audience.

Read in this light, it becomes increasingly difficult to classify elocution under the banner of mere theatricality, for while elocution is often reviled for its use of gesture and/or spectacle, Sheridan’s elocutionary theory reveals a clear distinction between performativity and theatricality, a distinction backed by current performance theorists

and scholars such as Richard Schechner, Victor Turner, Tracy C. Davis and Thomas Postlewait. Performance, as outlined by Sheridan, becomes a complex amalgamation of the social demands of the audience and the internal demands of the speaker as Sheridan insists that while the “chief end of all public speakers is to persuade . . . the speaker should at least appear himself to believe, what he utters; but this can never be the case, where there are any evident marks of affection, or art” (*Lectures* 121). Rather, Sheridan insists that the speaker maintain a sincere performance, placing emphasis not on spectacle or overt theatricality, but rather on “the same tones and gesture, that he is accustomed to in life” (*Lectures* 121), a process that requires an intimate knowledge of the self in combination with the needs of the audience.

In this sense, one could argue that elocution falls in line largely with performance theory and with the works of theorists such as Richard Schechner and Victor Turner, each of whom presents performance as necessarily reflexive. According to Turner, “Performative reflexivity is a condition in which a sociocultural group, or its most perceptive members acting representatively, turn, bend or reflect back upon themselves, upon the relations, actions, symbols, meanings, codes, roles, statuses, social structures, ethical and legal rules, and other sociocultural components which make up their public ‘selves.’” (Turner 24), a process through which the speaker is able to reconcile his or her public and private persona. This process would seem to differ considerably from theatricality in that theatricality remains largely defined by “dramatic and performance texts” (restrained, therefore, by the stage) (Davis and Postlewait 31), suggesting a certain degree of inflexibility. However, perhaps more importantly,

Sheridan insists that the most pressing difference between theatricality and performance is that while performance requires a certain degree of reflexivity, or personal engagement from the speaker, theatricality, or what Sheridan terms “theatrical declamation,” involves a non-reflexive reliance on “stylistic ornaments,” the strict and unnatural imitation of another speaker’s personal expressions, and a rejection of one’s natural oratorical skills (*Lectures* 54), placing the “theatrical” speaker in the realm of exaggeration or insincerity while also positioning the public persona in direct opposition to the private.

Making a clear distinction between “theatrical declamation” and “natural” speech or performance (*Lectures* 74), Sheridan implies that theatricality, at least in the context of elocutionary theory, remains outside the realm of reflexivity, offering only the potential for mimicry and imitation. In this way, despite his insistence on linguistic assimilation, Sheridan seeks to position himself outside the realm of theatricality which, he implies, relies strictly on the exterior, rejecting the process of self-reflexivity and instead focusing purely on the imitative. Sheridan’s emphasis remains focused on the importance of “natural” speech (*Lectures* 74), suggesting that performance—in opposition to theatricality—allows for a genuine investigation of the “natural” self in relation to one’s audience, particularly since the speaker, in performing according to his or her “immediate sentiments,” allows for the merger of the personal *with* the public. Therefore, while Sheridan’s reliance on pronunciation and gesture implies a certain degree of theatricality inherent in elocutionary theory, his emphasis on critical self-

reflection and his own dismissal of “theatrical declamation” requires contemporary scholars to reconsider elocution under the banner of performativity.

Sheridan’s sincere performer would seem to demonstrate performance as it is later defined by Richard Schechner: “the art that is open, unfinished, decentered, liminal. Performance is a paradigm of process” (Schechner 8). Under Schechner’s definition, it is not unreasonable to view performance as essential to the individual’s internal development in both a private and social context. In fact, Turner, largely the inspiration behind Schechner’s own analysis of performance, goes so far as to suggest that “the ‘self’ is split up the middle—it is something one both *is* and that one *sees* and, furthermore, acts upon as though it were another. It is again, not a matter of doting upon or pining over the projected self . . . but acting upon the self-made-other in such a way as to transform it” (Turner 25, my emphasis). Turner’s statement in many ways mirrors Sheridan’s own arguments regarding the process of sincere performativity which, though directed by a standardized dialect, remains subject to constant reevaluations by the speaker. For Sheridan, as for Schechner and Turner, performance relies on the process of critical self-reflection, meaning that in order to present an “authentic” voice or image, the speaker must not only reflect upon and ultimately relate or act out his personal experiences to the world but must also acknowledge the revisionary nature of such performances. Thus, sincerity becomes, in part, an ongoing process of reading both one’s self and others in order to reach what Sheridan terms a “universal” audience (*British Education* 13). Consequently, Sheridan’s performance becomes less an act of mimicry and more an insistence upon the speaker’s ability to assess and ultimately come

to terms with his or her own experiences in order to offer a sincere performance of the self.

In outlining this communicative process, Sheridan presents linguistic identity as distinct from the more generalized notion of individual identity while also offering his own native Ireland a complex formula for interacting with its British counterpart. According to Sheridan, language represents both the individual and the state, reflecting both “immediate sentiments” (*Lectures* 70) as well as “that society to which . . . [the speaker] more immediately belong[s]” (*British Education* 13). In this sense, linguistic identity not only remains an inherently liminal aspect of the individual but represents the shifting demands of both the internal and the external. Linguistic identity, as both a private and public expression of the individual, can be shaped and altered apart from and in conjunction with the self, a point of considerable interest to those nations struggling to gain, and in many ways construct, a new and independent national identity.

Therefore, not surprisingly, elocutionary theory would considerably influence Ireland throughout the eighteenth, nineteenth and twentieth centuries and would ultimately encourage Irish writers to consider the restrictions and potential freedoms in conforming to the English language, allowing Ireland to eventually reconstruct its national/linguistic identity on its own terms. This is particularly evident in the works of Wilde, Shaw and Friel, each of whom participates in Irish theatre according to Mary Trotter’s definition: as “a community activity that requires its producers to draw in the attention and participation of audiences who, through their reaction to the performance, participate actively in the construction of meaning in the theatre event” (Trotter 1). This

process of community formation becomes a particularly complex topic in Ireland throughout the eighteenth, nineteenth and twentieth-centuries as Ireland's national identity became inextricably tied to a series of agricultural crises. Beginning in the 1700s and reaching catastrophic levels in the 1800s, these agricultural crises prompted writers such as Sheridan, Wilde, Shaw, and Friel to create a new national voice in the midst of Ireland's evolving identity crisis. In the wake of the Great Famine, Ireland would be asked to take stock of its past, considering a series of historical moments that, as R.F. Foster suggests, defined "modern Ireland" (3) and contributed to the investigation of language as both a performative and authentic representation of the self. Sheridan is an inextricable part of this conversation and, as each playwright makes clear, the theories and practices of elocution became essential to the investigation of nineteenth and twentieth century Irish national identity just as they had been in the eighteenth century.

As each playwright revises elocutionary theory for his contemporary audiences, he also reasserts elocution's overall importance to those historical moments in which national identity, civic virtue and linguistic authenticity are questioned. In doing so, Wilde, Shaw and Friel revive and revise Sheridan's sincere performer for a later generation of writers concerned with similar questions regarding the nature of authenticity, performance and linguistic identity. In this sense, the impact of Sheridan's theory on the eighteenth, nineteenth and twentieth-century Irish national identity becomes particularly germane to current mainstream discussions of writing and voice as pedagogical theorists attempt to strike a balance between divergent views of what constitutes authenticity and performance through debates over personal and academic, or

standard, English. For current examples of how these discussions have been addressed in relation to contemporary composition studies, this thesis turns to the works of writers such as Gloria Anzaldúa, Keith Gilyard and Jacqueline Jones Royster, who, rather than taking to the stage, have turned to genres such as the personal narrative in order to explore the ramifications of playing the part of the academic. These genres have come to represent a space in which to explore the convergence of the academic with the personal, as each of the above mentioned authors deals with discussions of voice, performance, authenticity and identity in relation to his or her own experiences in various academic settings.

Composition studies, when placed in dialogue with the historical, cultural, linguistic and literary movements of “modern Ireland,” reveals a decidedly complex relationship between Sheridan’s views on language acquisition and current views of what it means to be a sincere performer, a connection made clear by Susan Miller as she argues that composition studies’

institutional responsibilities to novice writers continue to expose it to every vibration in public expectations for the use of a nationalized written dialect, Edited American English. Yet it equally continues to adjust its practices to various specialized goals and cultural distractions, all of which challenge many of those public expectations about language instruction even as they create important new academic customs. (xxxvi)

In this sense, composition studies remains closely tied to elocutionary theory as it seeks to strike a balance between two seemingly contradictory views of language acquisition

as both a nationally standardized and individually motivated process—a complex dichotomy that in many ways defines Sheridan’s own views of elocution. Thus, through this view of composition instruction, this thesis seeks to investigate the role of Sheridan’s sincere performer in contemporary writing classrooms with the hope that such an exploration will allow academic writers and educators to move away from seeing themselves as mimicking academic discourse (an explicitly inauthentic act) and instead encourage an investigation of performance and authenticity as aspects of the same communicative process. Furthermore, in recognizing the role that elocution has played historically in discussions of acquiring standardized discourse, scholars and educators will be better able to approach difficult discussions about authenticity, performativity and identity in the classroom setting in order to create a more open and productive learning and writing environment.

Yet, understanding the long-term effects of Sheridan’s theories, particularly in terms of his relevance to current writing processes, means understanding not only the systematic and historical implementations of elocution but also the national politics involved in its execution. As an Anglo-Irishman, Sheridan himself remains an important figure in terms of Irish assimilation to English during the eighteenth century. Though elocution as a whole set out to standardize numerous variations of the English dialect across the British Isles, taking up the linguistic variances among both the Scottish and the Welsh, Ireland presents a strong example of the ways in which Sheridan’s views of national and linguistic identity were both accepted and ultimately challenged through performative means. As Thomas P. Miller reminds us, “Sheridan repeatedly argued that

instruction in public speaking was needed to check the spread of ‘irreligion, immorality, and corruption’ (*British Education* 1)” (136), a goal perhaps ideally suited to the British view of Ireland, as Sheridan himself argued for the English language as “universal not only of ancient, but of all modern wisdom” (*British Education* 218). This statement places Sheridan, as an Anglo-Irishman, in a particularly complex position. Still, in many ways, Ireland became an ideal launching point for Sheridan’s educational and rhetorical experiments since, *as an Anglo-Irishman*, he was aware not only of the educational needs of the country but of the countless attempts by the English to cure the Irish of their so-called linguistic barbarity, a point of view which Sheridan would appear to share.

According to Wilbur Samuel Howell, the British were acutely aware of the dialectical differences which had infiltrated the English language, particularly with regards to “the many differences which existed between London English, on the one hand, and Scottish or Irish or American English, on the other” (156). This awareness prompted a renewed desire for linguistic uniformity in the eighteenth century, though Jed Esty, paraphrasing J. A. Hobson, implies that such linguistic influences are, in fact, the inevitable result of imperialism, suggesting that “imperialism disrupts English self-possession by incorporating territories that are only ‘in some sense’ identical with itself” (26) and implicating Britain as the initiating party in its own linguistic war. Still, Howell asserts that for the British, these differences “were no longer to be regarded merely as attractive and desirable variations from locality to locality, but as positive hindrances to the cultural, political, commercial, and occupational welfare of a growing and dynamic world empire” (156). Thus, elocution provided a possible solution to this problem,

particularly in light of its formula for standardization and especially in relation to the Irish culture, a point aptly demonstrated in works of Wilde, Shaw and Friel.

As each playwright demonstrates and Miller implies, the success of Sheridan's elocutionary model required, to a large degree, the willingness of the Irish speaker to take up the language of his or her English counterparts—a process that, according to Miller, often meant the eradication of the Irish dialect:

The painful irony of the elocutionary movement is that it appealed most to those whose language it set out to eradicate . . . [Sheridan's] elocutionary writings appealed to audiences who were afraid that they too might be laughed at for their own 'provincial or vicious pronunciation' (*Course . . . on Elocution* 47). To those not 'born and bred' in polite society, Sheridan offered a pronouncing dictionary and manuals on how to speak like the English as well as self-improvement lectures promising to help anyone eradicate the 'corrupt' dialect that 'custom has established in the place of his birth or education' (*Dissertation* 11)" (Miller 138).

There is no denying the problematic nature of Sheridan's views regarding "provincial" language; however, Miller's assertion seems to demonize Sheridan for his "eradication" of the Irish dialect even as he readily argues for the willing participation of the Irish in their own linguistic standardization. Indeed, while Sheridan no doubt influenced the teaching of English in Ireland, promoting a rhetorical doctrine based on linguistic standardization, to blame him for the Irish language's "eradication" would give the elocutionist too much credit, and the Irish not enough.

To begin with, Sheridan, as an Irishman, does not represent simply the English drive to cure the Irish of their dialect, though, admittedly, his Anglo-Irish status complicates his role considerably. Still, we might consider the paradoxical nature of Miller's argument in which he asserts that while Sheridan's teachings "set out to eradicate" the Irish culture through language, many Anglo-Irish, Sheridan included, not only willingly set out to learn English but "wanted to lose their native speech as quickly as possible" (Miller 118). Miller's analysis, then, becomes somewhat contradictory as he suggests that the Irish, though often willing assimilators, become, under Sheridan, forced participants. Thus, while Sheridan's role in the standardization of English in Ireland no doubt carries with it the weight of English oppression, the dismissal of Sheridan—and elocution in general—on the grounds that elocution stands simply as an unyielding proponent of linguistic and cultural homogenization seems a somewhat exaggerated claim, and leaves little room for the consideration of elocution as important to ongoing discussions of voice and individual autonomy within the context of English studies, points of discussion upon which elocution has much to add.

According to Wade M. Mahon, the singling out of elocution becomes a rather complex process for critics. Specifically, Mahon asserts that while "both Howell and Miller are correct to point out real problems in the theories and practices of the elocution movement . . . these weaknesses—the narrow scope of rhetoric, ignoring the oral practices of marginalized cultures—are common throughout eighteenth-century rhetoric in general" (70). Though this commonality by no means stands as a ringing endorsement of elocution, Mahon goes on to suggest that to blame elocution for its willing rejection

of “provincial” dialects is to call into question most if not all rhetorical schools as “Sheridan’s attitude toward provincials and other ‘barbarians,’ whose cultural practices deviate from the polite norms of English society, can be found throughout the writings of practically all rhetoricians at the time” (69). In this sense, Mahon argues that critics cannot “isolate elocution as strange in comparison to other rhetorical approaches. When viewed in context, elocutionists appear ‘comfortable in their age, their doctrines quite compatible with the thought of the era’” (Mohrmann qtd. in Mahon 69-70). Therefore, while Miller seems intent on painting the “provincial” (139) Irish as more or less bewitched by elocution, a careful analysis of Ireland’s engagement with language and performance suggests that, by the eighteenth century, the willingness of many rural *and* Anglo-Irish to take on the English language had become less a product of linguistic anxiety than it was an understanding and willing engagement with the English audience for a variety of purposes, many of which become intricately connected to the national instability of an increasingly impoverished Ireland.

In this sense, nineteenth and twentieth-century Irish drama presents an interesting case study insofar as the Irish, though willing participants in the standardization of their native dialectics for the most part, soon began to explore and ultimately exploit the performative aspects of eighteenth century elocution as a process by which to establish individual and national autonomy in the context of a modern Ireland. Taking up Sheridan’s somewhat contradictory view of language as both a sincere and performative act, the nineteenth and twentieth century saw many Irishmen looking to the theatre in order to play out the linguistic war between Ireland and England on the stage—a

medium historically suited to discussions of individual autonomy/authorship and authenticity as well as national or ethnic identity, topics which ultimately link eighteenth-century elocution, nineteenth and twentieth century Irish drama and contemporary composition studies. In this sense, an investigation of eighteenth-century elocution's various revivals and revisions encourages not only further analysis of elocutionary theory in relation to current discussions of linguistic performance and authenticity but also provides a valuable case study for academics who wish to understand the versatility of Sheridan's sincere performer in their own classroom environments.

These discussions continue to provide new opportunities through which to explore and challenge the tenets of elocution as they exist within English studies. Despite past attempts to reject elocution and its influences, recent composition studies has, whether intentionally or not, become a centralized forum for views strikingly similar to Sheridan's theories on language and learning. And, as it turns out, the connection is already well in place. According to William Riley Parker, the English discipline stems from the "shortlived" marriage of Oratory and Philology, a relationship that eventually dissolved under the pressure of various interludes, not the least of which being Oratory's "disgraceful affair . . . with Elocution" (4). Parker goes on to suggest that, in taking it upon themselves to teach composition, English departments may have stepped beyond their pale, placing themselves in the midst of a family dynamic not fully understood, particularly in reference to freshman composition (12). Yet, such an assertion is problematic given Parker's own argument that the English discipline is, in

essence, the love child of Oratory and Philology, and that Rhetoric, an essential member of the aforementioned family tree, still bears considerable weight in the development of English studies. However, what seems obvious from Parker's analysis is that English departments, in taking on the teaching of composition, effectively tied themselves to a rhetorical, oratorical and theatrical history that, to this day, remains largely unexamined within the context of the composition classroom.

This history, though largely unacknowledged in conversational classroom discourse, manifests itself in the writings of those students and academics who have become all too aware of the performative nature of the academy, particularly in relation to writing. In discussing topics and binaries such as standardization versus home discourse, and authenticity versus performance, composition theorists continue to question those very contradictions that exist between personal and civic discourse in Sheridan's theories of elocution, though civic discourse has largely been renamed "academic" discourse. While various contemporary writers and composition theorists such as David Bartholomae continue to advocate academic discourse as retaining a certain degree of civic virtue in relation to the academic setting—allowing students to "feel the pleasure or power of authorship" ("Writing" 69)—for many pedagogues the "academic" language and/or standard taught in current composition classrooms retains few of the assumed attributes of civic discourse. While civic discourse would seem to take us closer to discussions of virtue and social advocacy, for many academic discourse has become a kind of linguistic monster, taking on the strictly performative and alienating aspects of elocution and language acquisition.

In his book *Telling Writing*, Ken Macrorie goes so far as to label academic English “Engfish,” arguing that “Students thoroughly trained in Engfish,” a Joycean-like incarnation of academic prose, “are hard put to find their natural voices [or home discourses] in the classroom” (13). In defining “natural” voice as a product of the individual’s early experiences and not a result of schooling or standardization, Macrorie places “natural” discourse in the realm of the emotive or personal and in direct opposition to academic or public discourse. Furthermore, academicians such as Macrorie argue that students thoroughly trained in “Engfish” become unable to function on a larger communicative scale beyond the confines of the university. Rather, having been told that they must conform to the linguistic standard of the academy, students find themselves trapped within a limited linguistic paradigm suited only to the academic environment, beholden to the demands of audience over the demands of the self. Unfortunately, in polarizing this debate, placing personal and academic discourse in direct opposition to one another, educators risk setting up a false view of language as inherently stable rather than malleable and open to revision.

Thus, in considering the role of elocution, current writing instructors need to move beyond asking our students to simply take on the role of the academic or personal speaker and instead ask them to consider what such linguistic performances mean and what value each process holds for them on both a personal and academic level. In this sense, we might consider that for Sheridan, as for his contemporaries, the speaker’s use of performance is not necessarily a dismissal of one’s natural or authentic self. Rather, the use of performance in relation to elocution represents a complex process by which

the speaker comes to recognize himself as a sincere performer. In other words, the speaker sees himself as capable of expressing his “natural” emotions through critical self-reflection and careful analysis of his immediate and “universal” audiences, a process which relies on the incorporation of both personal and performative linguistic strategies. Read in this light, Sheridan’s elocutionary theory provides a means by which to reassess polarized debates over the validity of standardized English, particularly as they occur within contemporary English classrooms. In tracing the evolution and revision of Sheridan’s elocutionary theory through a variety of historical moments, scholars will be able not only to confront difficult discussions of authenticity, performance and linguistic identity in a contemporary classroom setting but to understand the influence, and ramifications, of the English discipline’s “disgraceful affair” (Parker 4) with elocution.

CHAPTER II

REACHING THE “UNIVERSAL” AUDIENCE: SHERIDAN’S ELOCUTIONARY MOVEMENT AND THE SEEMING PARADOX OF SINCERE PERFORMATIVITY

While no doubt problematic, eighteenth century elocution, well exemplified in the works of Thomas Sheridan, cannot be so quickly dismissed within the context of contemporary English studies. Rather, according to W. Benzie “the popularity of the elocution movement did not fall off during the . . . [nineteenth] century in either Britain or America, despite criticism of the artificiality of manner which resulted from emphasis being given to the more mechanical aspects of delivery” (53). Moreover, Benzie argues that the elocutionary movement has, in fact, “continued to exert influence in the . . . [twentieth] century, and systems of speech education still in use today owe a great deal to the pioneering work of the early elocutionists, particularly Sheridan” (53). Read in this light, eighteenth century elocutionary theories offer important insights into the ways in which discussions of linguistic identity, “natural” and standard discourse, and performativity are addressed and ultimately incorporated into the contemporary English classroom, an environment often predicated on the acquisition of academic or standardized English.

In his discussion of eighteenth century elocution, Thomas P. Miller asserts specifically that “while Sheridan and other elocutionists valorized speech as the natural language of the passions, they programmatically set out to ‘methodize the whole of the English language’ by establishing written rules to govern oral expression (*Plan of*

Education xviii)” (Miller 119). Miller’s statement goes a long way in revealing the intricate, albeit paradoxical, relationship between authentic and performative discourse as it exists within Sheridan’s works, a relationship that continues to resurface amid ongoing debates surrounding not only elocution but contemporary views of writing and voice. Moreover, Miller draws attention to the fact that Sheridan’s theories on language and learning demonstrate a complex and sometimes conflicting relationship between the belief in the value of personal discourse as an extension of the authentic self, and the desire to create a standardized discourse in order to shape the individual into an ideal citizen, a dichotomy that remains, in one form or another, prevalent in most if not all contemporary composition courses. While Miller presents this relationship as not only problematic but inherently contradictory, the merging of personal discourse with the larger ideals of civic virtue represents an important and potentially flexible theoretical tenet in Sheridan’s eighteenth century elocutionary theory as this merger becomes essential to understanding the enduring tradition of elocution throughout the nineteenth, twentieth and twenty-first centuries, particularly in terms of its influence on notions of national and linguistic identity as well as its complex association with notions of performance and authenticity. Thus, despite attempts by contemporary critics to dismiss elocution as purely assimilationist in its goal to standardize the English language, it soon becomes apparent that aspects of eighteenth century elocution, particularly those theories and practices presented by Sheridan, offer a complex lens through which to reevaluate discussions of language acquisition, performativity and authenticity. For this reason,

contemporary writers, scholars and teachers need to reconsider the role of sincere performativity in establishing an “authentic” voice.

In her article entitled, “Thomas Sheridan: A Chapter in the Saga of Standard English,” Jayne Crane Harder credits the elocutionary movement with having a lasting impact not only on views of rhetoric but on the language arts in general, stating that “when the eighteenth-century elocutionists combined their recommendations for ‘the art of speaking’ with lexicography, they established a new point of authoritative departure for subsequent grammarians, speech teachers, and school teachers of the language arts right up to the present time” (17). Harder, not unjustly, places Sheridan at the forefront of this movement, citing Sheridan as the main voice for the development of elocution as a system based upon the use of “natural language” (19) which, as Daniel E. Vandraegen suggests, requires the speaker to identify through critical self-reflection and performance “that which . . . [is] typical and customary in nature and human experience” (Vandraegen 59), thereby presenting a complex amalgamation between the private and public self. According to Harder, this emphasis on “natural language” sets Sheridan apart from many of his contemporaries and provides critics with an important lens through which to view Sheridan’s works (19).

Unfortunately, Sheridan’s promotion of “natural language” has often been overlooked in favor of his insistence that pronunciation and gesture, in order to be “natural,” must also meet a certain standard of uniformity. Harder specifically asserts that, for Sheridan,

pronunciation . . . was a distinguishing mark of different classes in contrast to poor articulation habits, which could be shared by all types of men. He believed . . . that a uniformity of pronunciation should prevail, and he choose the “polite pronunciation” of the court as the model because “all other dialects, are sure marks, either of a provincial, rustic, pedantic, or mechanical education; and therefore have some degree of disgrace annexed to them” (Sheridan qtd. Harder 19).

If standardization equals a “natural” mode of communication, allowing the speaker to express genuine emotion through careful pronunciation and gesture, then Sheridan’s emphasis on the “polite pronunciation of the court” (*Lectures* 30) offers a disconcerting perspective on those living apart from the ruling classes. Indeed, under this definition, Sheridan reveals a distinct class bias which continues to set him at odds with academics and scholars as eighteenth century elocution seems largely directed at marginalized, rural or impoverished communities, dismissed by Sheridan as “provincial, rustic, pedantic” (*Lectures* 30) and, as he suggests in the subtitle of his treatise on *British Education*, “false.” Sincerity, then, would seem to represent, at least for Sheridan, a class distinction as well as a process of linguistic assimilation or eradication.

Understandably, such assertions create a fair amount of unease among current scholars of rhetoric and writing; certainly, elocution, when read in this light, would appear nothing more than a system based upon an homogenizing and false oratorical process. However, if, as Benzie suggests, eighteenth century elocution remains a prevalent influence within the context of the contemporary classroom, these theories,

problematic or not, need to be seriously scrutinized in order to *reexamine*, and perhaps resolve, contemporary debates over the nature of language acquisition, particularly in the context of the current writing classroom. Unfortunately, when elocution *has* been considered by recent academics, it has been used only in an attempt to demonstrate the parallels that exist between the negative and theatrical aspects of elocution and the teaching of academic discourse, for, as Miller argues, the “opposition of primitivism and propriety” set up by Sheridan and other eighteenth century elocutionists remains “central to the centrifugal and centripetal forces that shaped the formation of college English as it worked to eradicate provincial traditions and instill a cosmopolitan sensibility” (139). In this sense, both elocution and academic discourse—a discourse predicated on the demands of academic scholarship and audiences and often directed through standardized English—have, to a certain degree, come to represent a kind of inauthentic paradigm that rejects the speaker’s authentic or home discourse in favor of an alienating or inauthentic linguistic standard, a representation that ultimately places academic discourse in line with the perceived negative aspects of performance.

These ties between performance and academic discourse have long been acknowledged, though rarely extended past the point of obvious metaphor. In his landmark essay “Inventing the University,” David Bartholomae goes so far as to associate the process of acquiring an academic voice with the taking on of “*rituals and gestures*, habits of mind, tricks of persuasion” (634), a process that asks students to be “consistently and *dramatically* conscious of . . . forming something to say;” a “*performance* for our benefit” (642-43, my emphasis). Bartholomae’s analogy may be

just that, a rough comparison; however, this does not change its aptness, and one would be remiss not to see the parallels that exist between contemporary views of academic discourse and Sheridan's views of standard English, particularly given Bartholomae's argument that "There is no better way to investigate the transmission of power, tradition and authority than by asking students to do what academics do" ("Writing" 66). This process, in essence, places academic discourse in the realm of civic virtue by asking students to enact academic standards in order to reach a greater level of individual self-reflection and agency and, in doing so, ties composition studies more directly to elocution.

That being said, Sheridan's elocutionary model is obviously the more extreme of the two theories, as the eighteenth century elocutionist sees the individual dialect and its standardization as vital not only to the speaker's personal development but to his role within the larger nationalist system. In his treatise on education, Sheridan specifically argues that "the body of the people become the guardians of their language, as well as their liberties, and it is observable that they both fell together" (*British Education* 246). As "guardians of their language," then, Sheridan's ideal speakers become national representatives of the state, lending their individual voices to the larger communicative whole in order to affect and promote linguistic, political and social stability. Furthermore, in guarding the language, "the body of the people" are better able to guard their "liberties" suggesting that there is both security and freedom in merging with the national identity. For English Studies, an initial problem with Sheridan's rhetorical theory is the fact that, in promoting a standard form of English, Sheridan is, in effect,

asking his speakers to perform for the nation, that is, to perform nationalism. This is not necessarily an unfair view of Sheridan's theory, particularly in light of the fact that for Sheridan, the main purpose of elocution was to forge a "common British culture" (Mahon 74) through the standardization of individual dialects.

However, while Sheridan's nationalist views of language and learning often leave him on the margins of contemporary English studies, the complexities of this perspective, though no doubt problematic, have the potential to lead scholars to a more complex and possibly insightful analysis of linguistic identity as sincerely performative. As Sheridan's treatises on education as well as elocution reveal, for the elocutionists, linguistic standardization did not signify the homogenization of the individual voice, nor did it produce an inauthentic or purely theatrical speaker. Rather, to standardize one's language is, for Sheridan and many of his contemporaries, a move towards individual autonomy, and not necessarily a removal from it. Instead, the individual speaker, in speaking according to a dialectical standard, becomes tied to larger social matters that entail not only the state but humanity as a whole. In this sense, self-knowledge is not, in fact, strictly to be found in the mind of the speaker.

Rather, in his assimilation with a larger discourse community, which he joins through a series of educational and self-reflective processes, the speaker learns the performative aspects of sincerity itself. In his treatise on *British Education*, Sheridan elaborates on this idea, arguing that

In well-regulated states, the two principle points of view in the education of youth, ought to be, first, to make them good men, good members of the

universal society of mankind; and in the next place to frame their minds in such a manner, as to make them most useful to that society to which they more immediately belong; and to shape their talents, in such a way, as will render them most serviceable to the support of that government, under which they were born, and on the strength and vigor of which, the well-being of every individual, in some measure depends. (13)

This quote, while seemingly straightforward in its goals to create “good men,” also hints at the spectacle that the speaker creates through his adherence and eventual demonstration of his “goodness.” Sheridan’s argument regarding education in “well-regulated states” is interesting to consider alongside themes of nationalism, performance, and authenticity, particularly if we consider the extent to which such themes become tied to the process of elocution and to its eventual rejection by critics. Though Sheridan does not outwardly suggest that the student perform language, or take on the mask of nationalism, there is a sense that in becoming a “good” person, the student must first learn what it means to enact nationalism.

To “frame” a student’s mind is to contain within it an image—in this case, the image of “that society to which they more immediately belong.” It is not wholly unreasonable then to assume that once “frame[d],” the student’s mind, his viewpoints and his goals, become not merely an inward representation of the nation, but an outward reflection of what it means to be “serviceable” to one’s government. In this sense, performance is not merely an important aspect of education, but an invaluable process in prompting civic responsibility, since it is through performance that the speaker is able to

affect the “well-being of every individual, in some measure.” That is, the speaker becomes a visual representation which others may emulate and ultimately recreate to fit the needs of the state and to become productive members of the “universal society of mankind.” These are no doubt problematic aspects of elocution, particularly in the works of Sheridan, as they raise legitimate concerns about the role that elocution has played in composition studies and in discussions of language acquisition in general. However, to ignore the influence of elocution is to create a new set of problems. Indeed, if one defines performativity as an “open, unfinished, decentered, [and] liminal” process (Schechner 8), a comparison implied by Sheridan through his insistence that the speaker must continually call upon “the immediate sentiments of his own mind” (*Lectures* 70) in order to engage in a sincere performance, then to ignore the potential of performativity in relation to the exploration and discussion of voice means, in essence, a dismissal of the reflexive, “open” and “liminal” nature of linguistic identity.

In Sheridan’s view of elocution we find a complex attempt to address the seemingly oppositional nature of performative and authentic discourse through the role of the individual speaker, an amalgamation which ultimately rejects theatricality or “theatrical declamation” (*Lectures* 54)—a process by which the speaker attempts to imitate the pronunciation of others as opposed to drawing from his own experiences of “private discourse” (*Lectures* 54)—as somewhat removed from the complexities of performance. In his lectures on elocution, Sheridan suggests that to speak well, to gain the support of that society to which the speaker most “immediately belongs,” the speaker must call upon “the immediate sentiments of his own mind” (*Lectures* 70); that is, he

must be aware of his individual thoughts, feelings, and sentiments in order to effectively command an audience. Thus, Sheridan would seem to suggest that the speaker already possesses those attributes necessary to his assimilation into a national identity, and that the speaker's innate talents are merely molded or even *revealed* in the process of meeting certain communicative standards. In this way, Sheridan suggests that through elocution, the speaker comes to recognize the importance of sincere performativity—the presentation of the internal or “sincere” self in conjunction with the demands or expectations of the audience. Considering the rhetorical power of elocution, Sheridan argues that just as “every passion has its peculiar tone, so has it, its peculiar look or gesture. And in each, the several degrees are marked, with the nicest exactness. Both indeed proceeding from the touching of one master-string, internal feeling, must always answer to each other, if I may so speak, in perfect union” (*Lectures* 114). In this way, Sheridan suggests that the speaker, in recognizing his own “internal feeling[s]” becomes a natural speaker, capable of presenting a sincere performance to his or her outside audiences, a process that, while seemingly theatrical, actually relies solely on the speaker's ability to authentically engage in the process of critical self-reflection.

Furthermore, in arguing that “every passion has its peculiar tone . . . look or gesture,” Sheridan suggests that while the sincere emotions of the speaker remain necessary to his or her success, emotions also become, in a way, prescribed or set, an assertion that very much identifies Sheridan as a product of his time, for as Tobin Nellhaus contends, during the eighteenth century “behaviour manuals,” hugely popular at the height of Sheridan's success, focused on similar notions of sincere performativity,

guiding “their readers in the correct postures and gestures for taking one’s leave, expressing anger, feeling perplexed, and so on” (Nellhaus 110). Through this process, the internal condition of the speaker becomes effectively linked to his or her public persona or presentation as speakers are asked to engage their internal emotions in order to project themselves into the character or representation expected by the audience. Read in this light, Sheridan situates performance in the realm not only of civic virtue, placing his speakers in the position to model natural sentiments on the national stage, but in the arena of self-exploration and growth, since such processes ultimately ask the speaker to question the degree to which taking on various roles, or acting the part, so to speak, can be disengaged from the emotional reality—the authentic internal condition—of the actor or speaker.

In this sense, Sheridan’s views on individual agency in many ways work to merge the romantic or natural self with that of the performative, or neo-classical self, a process which suggests that the performative aspects of the individual cannot and should not be dismissed as merely theatrical, insincere or inauthentic. It is within this merger that we begin to hear an echo of current debates in English studies in relation to the acquisition of academic discourse and the retaining of personal voice, as this amalgamation creates an image of the self as not so much split between two worlds, but rather existing and growing through its equal commitment to both internal or expressive discourse and an outside linguistic standard. Indeed, according to H. Lewis Ulman, Sheridan’s theories on education and rhetoric reflect an attempt to reconcile the larger split that already existed within the elocutionary movement “between ‘natural’ and

‘mechanical’ schools . . . between elocutionists whose primary method was to proscribe unnatural habits of delivery and those who prescribed elaborate schemes of fixed tones and gestures” (Ulman 150). Sheridan’s view of elocution would appear to conform largely to the former school, though as Ulman later argues, the two schools are not as diametrically opposed as they would seem.

Instead, Ulman insists that to divide elocution into a system of polarities is to ignore the most basic tenet or goal of each school. Calling upon the works of Daniel E. Vandraegen, Ulman proceeds not only to define these schools as relative to one another but also to, in a sense, bring the two movements into a kind of dialogue. Specifically, Ulman asserts that the terms “natural” and “mechanical” have since been “called into question” by critics like Vandraegen who argue that categories such as “natural” and “mechanical” do not provide room for the key point of commonality that exists between the two groups; the key point being that “both traditions—which he [Vandraegen] terms ‘romantic’ and ‘neo-classical’—believed that they were helping students to follow Nature” (Ulman 151). Therefore, to dismiss one school as purely “mechanical” is to ignore the end result of both, for while each school’s methods may differ, their goal is, nevertheless, the same—to promote naturalness in speech and character.

It is therefore not surprising that, in attempting to merge the individual voice with the larger social and political needs of the state, Sheridan found aspects of both schools appealing in his attempt to revamp the educational system and promote what he terms the “natural” speaker. Placing these seemingly oppositional schools of elocution in dialogue with one another, Sheridan not only demonstrates his somewhat paradoxical

views on individuality and virtue but also creates the greatest potential for the convergence of individual autonomy and national identity. From the neo-classicist school, Sheridan seems to have latched onto the notion that following “Nature” means both “recognizing and expressing that which . . . [is] typical and customary in nature and human experience,” and, to an extent, engaging in a “performance governed by rules based upon order, regularity, and patterns of common acceptance” (Vandraegen 59). Sheridan’s adherence to these aspects of neo-classicism is most readily exercised in his educational doctrine on English standardization, and is somewhat lessened in his theories on the actual implementation of elocution, which seem to lean more steadily toward the romanticist view.

This shift creates a system of elocution that would seem diametrically opposed in terms of its larger principles, unless one considers Sheridan’s views on nature in relation to language. Sheridan’s educational goals—his insistence that education “ought to be, first, to make . . . good men, good members of the universal society of mankind; and in the next place to frame their minds in such a manner, as to make them most useful to that society to which they more immediately belong” (*British Education* 13)—directly align him to a neoclassical recognition and expression of “that which was typical and customary in nature and human experience” (Vandraegen 59). From Sheridan’s perspective, it is not the student’s native dialect but rather the student’s understanding of his role in both a “universal” and “immediate” social system that ultimately allows him to “follow nature,” a perspective which once again fosters discussions of nationalism and civic duty. Through the student’s realization of his role in both the “universal” and

“immediate” social spheres, a process of social assimilation or “belonging” occurs, which in turn enables the student to reach a state of individual authenticity and agency, and to eventually become a “good man.”

Read in this light, the linguistic standardization promoted throughout Sheridan’s treatises on education, and the imitation and/or performances required to meet that standard, become tied to both individual and social virtue, not to falsity or inauthenticity. Admittedly, the performance required to achieve linguistic standardization still calls Sheridan’s “natural” theories on public speaking into question, particularly in light of his open disdain of “theatrical declamation,” unless, of course, we recall that Sheridan does not view performance as wholly synonymous with theatricality, especially not in terms of teaching a standardized English. Rather, since performance becomes a key component in Sheridan’s process of language acquisition, one could argue that Sheridan’s view of performance is less tied to notions of pure theatricality than it is to the belief that imitation of “correct” English leads to authenticity. For Sheridan this implies a state in which the speaker, having gained fluency in the “correct” or “universal” English language, also maintains the ability to assess his or her inner thoughts in order to persuade the audience through the speaker’s genuine emotions. Thus, authenticity relies on both the speaker’s ability to assimilate to Sheridan’s English standard and to critically self-reflect on his or her own personal experiences, which the speaker then communicates to the audience. While this perspective presents obvious problems in terms of its emphasis on assimilation to English, touted by Sheridan as a “universal” linguistic standard, it also goes a long way in bridging the seemingly unconquerable gap

between Sheridan's neo-classical and romantic views. Having achieved the linguistic standard necessary for their assimilation into "that society to which they more immediately belong," Sheridan's students need no longer fear falsity in themselves—they have gained an authentic national identity and may now begin to draw from their own experiences in order to achieve an authentic mode of delivery.

It may seem an odd leap to go from linguistic standardization and civic duty to personal autonomy and romanticism in the course of one's early education; however, a closer analysis of Sheridan's views on language suggest that, for Sheridan, the romantic self cannot exist without the standardization of language, nor can individual autonomy be gained without an acknowledgement of one's tie to the affairs of the state. To begin with, one might consider the possibility that, for Sheridan, the move to correct "poor articulation habits" (Harder 19)—which Sheridan equates with falsity—and ultimately standardize various native dialects, holds little moral iniquity in terms of rejecting individual agency or identity. For Sheridan, this aspect of the process would appear in no way to negatively affect the individual in terms of autonomy, or even to factor into the process of individuation, period. Rather, Sheridan implies that standardization—contrary to its nature—becomes a tool by which the individual *reaches* personal autonomy while simultaneously merging his professional, political and social desires with those of the state. Specifically, standardization represents a means by which the "good man" can begin to understand himself in relation to the "universal society of mankind," while also realizing his potential within "that society to which . . . [he] more immediately belong[s]," the implication here being that the individual becomes a fuller, more

complete and authentic being through the process of refining his dialect and assimilating into the larger communicative system of which he is already a member. Having been brought to a place of authenticity through the process of assimilation and the rejection of his “provincial” or “false” discourse, Sheridan’s speaker is now free to explore elocution through a process of critical self-reflection and can therefore reject the more theatrical aspects of imitation.

This progression relies on the belief that the student, having aligned himself with the “natural” discourse of his society, need not fear nor rely on unnaturalness or inauthenticity in speech. Having gone through the process of “recognizing and expressing that which was typical and customary in nature and human experience” (Vandraegen 59) and having mastered what Sheridan calls a “conversational” dialect (Harder 19), the speaker begins to engage in the more romantic aspects of Sheridan’s theory, which favor “recognizing and expressing that which was unique and personal in nature and human experience. It meant recognition of irregularity, and acceptance of deviation from set patterns of performance . . . a distrust of rules, a suspicion of models, and a questioning of imitation as a discipline of instruction. It meant above all, a reliance upon the individual’s personal response” (Vandraegen 60-61). Specifically, Sheridan asks the speaker to use “the immediate sentiments of his own mind” (*Lectures* 70) as a means of directing his use of emphasis, tone, gesture and the like, and to, as Jay Fliegelman describes it, “heatedly . . . [reject] the narrow conception of rhetoric as stylistic ornaments, as Aristotelian topics, and as topically generated arguments” (30). Instead, Sheridan encourages “a purified rhetoric of persuasion broadly understood as

the active art of moving and influencing the passions” (Fliegelman 30). The speaker is, therefore, “active” not only in terms of his delivery, but also in regards to his “active” engagement with his own sentiments and emotional experiences, which necessarily inform and ensure his ability to persuade.

In this sense, the performance cannot work without the speaker’s sincere engagement with his own thoughts. Thus, the act of persuasion becomes a somewhat liberating experience for the speaker as, having conformed to the linguistic standards of his society, the individual self and the social self are free to merge. It is through this merger that we see the seemingly dualistic tenets of Sheridan’s theory reach a point of reconciliation through the voice of the speaker. Specifically, the amalgamation of the personal with the performative or national self suggests that performance becomes an essential, even natural, part of the speaker’s attempt to gain fluency. The student of elocution, in accepting the performative nature of language, becomes a “natural” speaker, able to communicate his immediate emotions to both his national and universal audiences. The negative associations placed on performativity and theatricality bear little or no connection to the spontaneous bodily outpouring of personal experience represented in the elocutionists’ emphasis on gesture, or even to the performance of emotion through various modes of delivery. Nor does Sheridan view “theatrical declamation” as in any way tied to the imitation of a standard dialect; rather, as previously suggested, “theatrical declamation” involves a reliance on “stylistic ornaments,” the strict and unnatural imitation of another speaker’s personal expressions, and a rejection of one’s natural oratorical skills.

Such aspects of what I have described above as theatricality, as far as Sheridan is concerned, are unnecessary to the “natural” speaker trained in elocution, for as Sheridan explains it:

everyone should content himself with the use of those tones only that he is habituated to in speech . . . thus, whatever he utters will be done with ease, and appear natural; whereas if he endeavours at any tones, to which he is not accustomed, either from fancy, or imitation of others, it will be done with difficulty, and carry with it evident marks of affection and art, which are ever disgusting to the hearer, and never fail to defeat the end of the speaker. (*Lectures* 74)

In this sense, Sheridan is not equating naturalness with the speaker’s native language or “home” discourse, as current pedagogy is wont to do; rather, for Sheridan, the orator’s natural skill in speaking comes from personal experience and expression, through the speaker’s “natural” inflection, tone, or gesture—those habits of the body that would remain customary to the speaker no matter his dialect. In this sense, Sheridan’s seemingly odd combination of neo-classicism and romanticism becomes intricately merged into a method of speech that allows for the speaker to shed those linguistic idiosyncrasies seen by Sheridan and his contemporaries as detrimental to the speaker’s larger social role while simultaneously enabling the speaker to reflect upon and utilize aspects of his own communicative process for the betterment of himself and others.

Read in this light, the process of critical self-reflection, if properly developed, would allow the speaker’s passions to flow forth in a spontaneous expression of

authentic feeling, a process that would conceivably negate the need for theatricality. Rather, emphasis is placed on performance as a system which relies on the dichotomy between the authentic self and what is often viewed as the performative self, tropes which necessarily raise questions about what it means to be sincere or natural, and what it means to perform or act before an audience. In his text *Sincerity and Authenticity: The Charles Eliot Norton Lectures, 1969-1970*, Lionel Trilling argues that “society requires of us that we present ourselves as being sincere, and the most efficacious way of satisfying this demand is to see to it that we really are sincere” (10-11); though writing from a twentieth-century perspective, Trilling’s assertion is not far removed from Sheridan’s own views of authenticity and sincerity as Sheridan claims that the speaker, relying on the “immediate sentiments of his own mind” in order to present a sincere representation of himself, enacts authenticity. However, on a more immediate level, this statement also alludes to the demands of the audience and the importance of the spectator in determining the success of the speaker.

Even Sheridan’s promotion of natural speech is not, in actuality, separate from the demands of the spectator or audience, but rather intricately connected to them. According to Benzie, “The importance of a natural mode of delivery is made clear, Sheridan writes, when one considers that ‘the first great object of every public speaker’ is to move his audience” (41). In elocution, then, one could argue that sincerity becomes the ultimate performance, as the self is displayed through a series of natural gestures, tones, pronunciations, and other forms of delivery with the intent of reaching and ultimately persuading the audience. Consequently, the speaker’s ability to persuade his

audience, though seen by Sheridan as a natural manifestation of the individual, is based on a knowledge not only of one's self but of those to whom one speaks.

Trilling adds to this argument, and in many ways illuminates Sheridan's own arguments regarding the nature of authenticity. Specifically, Trilling argues that the process of seeing to it that "we really are sincere" is a process which entails a certain degree of role playing since, in order to show "that we actually are what we want our community to know we are . . . we play the role of being ourselves, we sincerely act the part of the sincere person, with the result that a judgment may be passed upon our sincerity that it is not authentic" (Trilling 11). In other words, the speaker must understand what the audience recognizes as sincere in the speaker and consistently mirror that back to the audience in order to persuade, a process which requires, according to Trilling, a degree of inauthenticity. This moment of inauthenticity results, then, not from an intentional lack of sincerity on the part of the speaker, but rather from the speaker's recognition of both himself and the expectations of his spectators and from his willingness to engage those expectations to persuasive ends.

In this way, the audience's desire to create the speaker through certain perceived values or beliefs ultimately places the two parties in a cyclical process of sincere performativity. Thus, the role of performance becomes an important aspect of the self and not necessarily diametrically opposed to what is natural or authentic in the individual. Rather, as Sheridan asserts, the orator, if he engages in proper English, is a sincere speaker—he can be no less, for to speak correctly is to reject falsity. In this sense, the speaker need not fear the more performative aspects of elocution, but should

instead embrace them as part of the individual process of expression and persuasion. Furthermore, Benzie suggests that the purpose of Sheridan's orator is to follow "general Nature" (14) meaning that the orator should act and speak "by the influence of those general passions and principles by which all minds are agitated.' By doing so, he achieves that which is unalterably true, which is what Sheridan means by 'natural.' Sheridan is confident that if people at large were to imitate the orators, the 'natural' would eventually become the accepted or 'fashionable action'" (Benzie 14). The orator is not merely persuading his audience—rather, he is performing for them the "natural" or "true" form of communication, a process which the audience is called upon to imitate. Though, again, this imitation is not seen by Sheridan as an exercise in inauthenticity, but rather as a means to allow the audience to connect to those innate and natural feelings that tie them not only to the orator but to those "general passions and principles by which all minds are agitated" (Johnson qtd. in Benzie 14). Therefore, while the speaker's delivery—his tone and gestures—can certainly be imitated, he is, in fact, presenting a universal truth which cannot be falsified, allowing the audience to imitate and merge with a larger communicative society, while maintaining a "universal" standard of truth and sincerity.

Given the "universality" of the speaker under Sheridan's educational and rhetorical system, it is not surprising that elocution enjoyed a certain degree of success among "[eighteenth] century writers and thinkers" (Benzie 16) for whom language had become a civic concern. Sheridan's views on language and nature found considerable favor among emerging American, Scottish, and Irish nationalist writers, many of whom

saw elocution as a means by which to explore the complex amalgamation of the individual voice and national discourse. Within these texts we find a similar effort to reconcile the natural speaker—the romantic self—with the demands of civic discourse, or neo-classical views of the individual. In fact, the fear of losing one’s authentic or personal voice, just as it remains a prevalent concern today, was a point of considerable discussion among writers and orators of the eighteenth century who valued an elaborate kind of eloquence at the same time that they feared the false aspects of theatricality.

In early American rhetoric, for example, the delineations between “natural theatricality” (Fliegelman 94) and false theatricality were established through the investigation of self as inherently performative, for “if acting was ultimately an act of self-possession and personal expression rather than of emotional identification or self-effacing alienation . . . then, to reverse the formula, natural behavior was the essence of theatricality” (Fliegelman 82). Fliegelman, in his chapter on “Natural Theatricality,” suggests that the role of the theatre in shaping America’s evolving perception of itself was in many ways predicated on the clear distrust of those aspects of performance associated with the British theatre, namely “the dangerous subordination of one’s real character . . . American virtue was, in contrast, rooted in the consumer end of theatricality” which promotes “the operations of sympathy and identification, the experience of being moved. Those operations that permitted one, in Pope’s popular phrase, ‘to feel another’s Woe,’ were routinely described in the eighteenth century with reference to what happens to a spectator in a theater” (Fliegelman 90-91). That the elocutionists had a role to play in this view of “natural theatricality” is obvious.

Indeed, Fliegelman cites the works of both James Burgh and Sheridan as communicating a view of language that relied heavily on personal expression and authenticity as inherently linked to one's "manner . . . of speaking" (Burgh qtd. in Fliegelman 30). Sheridan adds to this discussion, as Fliegelman notes, suggesting that

"All writers seem to be under the influence of one common delusion, that by the help of words alone, they can communicate . . . they forget that the passions and fancy, . . . all that is noble and praise worthy . . . in man considered as a social being" depends "upon having a language of their own, utterly independent of words." Elocution, the physical performance of language, articulates this "other language." Speaking thus becomes less a form of argumentative or expository communication than a revelation of "internal moral dispositions" and passions registered by vocal tones, physical "exertions," and facial expressions that are received in unmediated form by the sympathetic "social" nature of the auditor.

(Sheridan qtd. Fliegelman 30)

Read in this light, it is not surprising that the theatre became a prime location for the creation and testing of national identity in both America and abroad as, for elocutionists and for those concerned with "natural theatricality," the body becomes central to the expression of language as a social act and to the exploration of the individual as a sincere performer; nor is it surprising that the later literary movements of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries would revive and revise these views in their presentation of

characters who, in many ways, exemplify the sometimes divided interpretations of language and identity presented in eighteenth century elocution.

In this sense, national literatures, in establishing—usually in opposition to each other—characters who represent and reinvent the standard discourse of their “immediate” societies allow for a dialogue between a multitude of voices, as well as encourage the investigation of authenticity through an inherently performative medium. This is no less true for the Irish; however, according to George Cusack, for Irish nationalists the dramatic genre often took precedence over that of the novel, which seemed to offer less opportunity for the open challenging of colonial rule and discourse, for while the novel “conceals the inequity of colonial authority which Irish nationalism sought to expose,” the drama, by its very nature, more easily “circumvent[s] the totality of colonial discourse” (Cusack 16). Cusack specifically argues that “in the absence of a third person narrator, the experiences of dramatic characters are transmitted directly to the audience, thus eliminating the impersonal filter which aligned the novel with imperial ideology” (16). This remains an important point to consider given that the stage or stereotypical Irishman was often a theatrical and literary mainstay in British and American theatre and, through repetition, became accepted as a somewhat accurate representation of Irishness.

Indeed, as Maureen Waters suggests, “since the Elizabethans the Irishman has been a stock figure on the stage, intended to amuse insofar as his customs and speech deviated from the English norm,” an image reflected in numerous “dramatic characters which varied in conception and were drawn from many different levels of society” (41).

Often, these characterizations enabled the dominant culture to place upon the Irish all of those characteristics which the dominant culture wished to deny or suppress within themselves. Thus, Declan Kiberd asserts that, for the British, Ireland became, in many ways, the “English unconscious”: “if . . . [England] was industrious and reliable, . . . [Ireland] was held to be indolent and contrary; if the former was mature and rational, the latter must be unstable and emotional; if the English were adult and manly, the Irish must be childish and feminine” (30). These characterizations inevitably extended to language, for as Waters suggests, many Irish “had come to regard [the] Irish [language] as an inferior instrument, but their efforts to speak English resulted in the brogue, which was grounds for further humiliation” (3), a point often exaggerated on the British and American stage. However, while such characterizations were no doubt intended to divide the Irish self and the English self along a clear set of definable linguistic, cultural and social lines, Wilde, Shaw and Friel, taking up the topic of linguistic and cultural performance, suggest that in many instances the Irish became masterful imitators of the “true” Irish identity, using language as a means by which to perform and ultimately subvert dominant views of Irishness and Irish nationalism. In this sense, the stage offered an ideal venue in which to not only communicate the Irish experience “directly” (Cusack 16) to Irish and British audiences but to reimagine and ultimately perform a new version of Irishness in both Britain and Ireland.

This willingness to not only take on the English language but the mask of Irishness is most readily explained in Wilde’s quip: “‘Man is least himself . . . when he talks in his own person. Give him a mask and he will tell you the truth’” (qtd in Trilling

119). Wilde was not alone in this philosophy as eighteenth and nineteenth century rhetorical theory had, in many ways, become accustomed to the idea that, in order to reach a point of sincerity, the speaker must, in essence, perform—that is, take on an expected persona or language. In an echo of Wilde, Emerson asserts that “‘There is no deeper dissembler . . . than the sincerest man,’ and in the following year, ‘Many men can write better in a mask than for themselves.’ Nietzsche, whose admiration of Emerson is always an engaging surprise, says with much the same intention: ‘Every profound spirit needs a mask’” (qtd. in Trilling 119). In this sense, performance became a means by which to engage sincerely with others and not necessarily a rejection of the authentic self. In a similar vein, the exploration of language as inherently performative became for many writers an opportunity by which to challenge views of performance as indicative of inauthenticity, particularly with regards to both linguistic and national identity.

Read in this light, nineteenth and twentieth century Irish drama presents an important medium by which English and Irish audiences can see themselves reflected in the words and actions of another while simultaneously engaging in moments of critical self-reflection. Through this process, audiences access both the personal and performative or social aspects of their own identities, in a sense becoming the sincere performer. However, apart from providing the opportunity for profound self-reflexivity, the dramatic genre enabled various Irish writers the ability to reconstruct their national identity as inherently malleable. This becomes particularly apparent in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century dramatic works of Wilde and Shaw. Writing in response to considerable agricultural, political, social and cultural upheaval in Ireland,

Wilde and Shaw set out to test the limitations and potential of Sheridan's sincere performer, placing Sheridan's theories in direct dialogue with growing concerns over the nature of Ireland's "true" national identity.

This dialogue, seen most prevalently in Wilde's *The Importance of Being Earnest* and Shaw's *Pygmalion*, would prove invaluable in the face of Ireland's internal struggles to reach a definitive state of selfhood in the midst of the Northern Troubles, struggles dramatized in Friel's *Translations*. In this way, the dramatic texts of Wilde, Shaw and Friel present an interesting case study as each dramatist employs Sheridan's image of the sincere performer in order to both challenge, revise and in some ways reject assimilationist views of language as well as stereotypical views of Irishness, while also establishing a new national identity for Ireland. In doing so, each playwright ultimately revives Sheridan's argument that the performative self, while ever problematic, is not only authentic but necessarily autonomous. Specifically, each playwright presents performance as an essential process whereby the individual recasts his or her own identity through both language and action, a process that ultimately enables the individual to explore, and at times exploit, both the possibilities and superficialities of those linguistic standards under which he or she has been asked to perform. Rendering sincerity "a difficult pose to keep up" (Wilde 245), Wilde, Shaw and Friel demonstrate the potentiality of Sheridan's sincere performer, expanding elocutionary theory beyond the limits of the eighteenth century in order to readdress issues of national and linguistic identity. In this way, each playwright offers an important lens through which to reevaluate and revise contemporary views of language acquisition and voice, enabling

contemporary writers, scholars and teachers to reconsider the role of sincere performativity in establishing an “authentic” linguistic identity.

CHAPTER III

RESTAGING IRISHNESS: ELOCUTIONARY VOICES IN THE MODERN IRISH THEATRE

Writing in the eighteenth-century, Thomas Sheridan placed elocution at the center of nationalist questions of identity and began an important dialogue about the nature of authenticity and performance. By emphasizing “speech as the natural language of the passions,” elocutionists such as Sheridan not only “programmatically set out to ‘methodize the whole of the English language’ by establishing written rules to govern oral expression (*Plan of Education* xviii)” (Miller 119) but also established a new image of the “authentic” individual. Rejecting the notion that the “authentic” speaker maintains a core identity, apart from which all else is a mask, Sheridan’s “authentic” or “natural” speaker was free to explore the self as multitudinous, a fact which renders Sheridan’s elocutionary theories relevant in moments of national crisis. Specifically, Sheridan’s elocutionary theory and practice lends itself to those moments when national identity becomes inherently fluid or unstable. This coincidence of national instability with a surge in attention to elocution explains the movement’s reemergence in nineteenth and twentieth century Ireland, which, not unlike Sheridan’s own eighteenth century Ireland, found itself in the midst of several agricultural disasters.

As R. F. Foster makes clear, the Great Famine of the nineteenth century, and the resulting diaspora that would continue to haunt Ireland during the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, was merely the apotheosis of a long line of rural catastrophes. Foster

specifically suggests that eighteenth century Ireland faced considerable agricultural crises including significant “crop failures and famines (1728-9, 1740-41, 1744-5, 1756-7) that paralleled shortages in Europe as a whole, but could lead in Ireland to horrifying local crises” (199). In the face of considerable loss of land and population, the creation of community through language, an aspect of elocution promoted by Sheridan, wielded considerable power in Ireland, and would be taken up with vigor in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries by playwrights such as Oscar Wilde, George Bernard Shaw and Brian Friel who, through the performative and dialogic medium of the theatre, would test the boundaries of Sheridan’s sincere performer and, in doing so, would ultimately revive and, to an extent, *revise* eighteenth century elocutionary theory and practice, making it relevant for a later generation of writers.

If creating community through language was to become essential to the establishment of a unified Ireland, the theatre offered a dedicated space in which audiences could not only witness but also engage fully in this process. Mary Trotter argues that “since the seventeenth century, theatrical performance in Ireland has served as a site of social and political contest at home and a product of cultural export abroad” (7). This socio-political focus has made the Irish theatre an ideal medium in which to address many of the issues raised by elocutionary theory, including questions of linguistic authenticity and performance. Furthermore, for many Irish dramatists, the Irish theatre, and performance in general, offered a certain degree of portability, as many Irish dramatists such as Wilde and Shaw sought to introduce the Irish theatre as a transportable entity that could exist inside and outside the borders of the nation itself,

suggesting that the Irish play could function and thrive in a variety of settings apart from nationalist views of what constituted the Irish landscape. This perspective not only encouraged Ireland to consider its relationship with Britain as essential to the negotiation of the Irish self but also positioned Wilde and Shaw in slight opposition to the goals of the Irish National Theatre Society.

In attempting to stabilize Ireland and the Irish national identity, movements such as the Irish National Theatre society sought to “establish a sense of Irish identity and community to counter . . . British imperialist stereotypes on economic, political and social levels” (Trotter 8), placing Ireland at the center of the Irish theatre in order to assert a stable and immovable Irish identity. Moreover, Trotter argues that nineteenth and twentieth century Irish nationalists often moved to reject “British cultural norms” (Trotter 8) in an effort to advance “images of an Irish ‘folk’ with the qualities upheld by the [nationalist] movement—spiritual, morally upright, healthy and, in order to appear as far removed from British influence as possible, living in an idealized, rural, Irish language-speaking West (Flemming 1995)” (Trotter 15). However, despite nationalist attempts to unify Irish identity, such idealized standards were difficult to maintain as Trotter contends that “the range of ideologies and identity positions within the nationalist community was one of the greatest challenges faced within the nationalist movement” as it attempted to reconcile the diverse and often conflicting views of “Anglo-Irish, Catholics, Socialists, militants, and liberal nationalists” (10). Thus, it is not surprising that, despite their attempts to use the Irish National Theatre to, in part, revise what had become an imperialized nation, nationalist groups were often fighting a losing

battle against an inherently complex, and constantly evolving, definition of “authentic” Irishness, a battle somewhat dramatized in the debut of J. M. Synge’s *Playboy of the Western World* (1907)—and the resulting riots—a play which aims, not unlike Wilde’s *The Importance of Being Earnest* (1895) and Shaw’s *Pygmalion* (1912), to refashion or explore Irish identity through the investigation and disruption of those superficial characterizations that, as Wilde suggests, ultimately deter the Irish from engaging in moments of deep self-reflexivity (Kiberd 36).

However, while Synge attempts to center discussions of Irish identity in the context of rural Ireland, exploring the integration of “Gaelic . . . into the English speech of some Irish, as well as certain properties of English itself,” through his construction of “a hybrid language” (Crawford 484), or “Synge-speak” as Nicholas Crawford terms it (483), Wilde and Shaw place such investigations wholly in the context of the “proper” (Shaw 42) English language, moving discussions of linguistic exchange into the upper-class English parlors of London in order to assert that, for all intents and purposes, Irish identity, in order to remain authentic, must become not only dialogic but nomadic. In this way, Wilde and Shaw’s willingness to transport Ireland across the boundaries of the Irish sea renders their works particularly relevant to the discussion of sincere performativity as each writer willingly acknowledges the role of the English “other” (Kiberd 48) as necessary to, or perhaps already a part of, the construction of the Irish self.

Thus, while Trotter focuses on the contributions of the Abbey Theatre, placing emphasis on the works of writers such as Gregory, Yeats, and Synge, Wilde and Shaw,

writing in the 1890s, had already become “the most important dramatists of the London theatre” (Hodgson 65) and would inspire the work of later Irish artists such as Friel, whose texts would again address “the relation of language to both public and private desire and . . . the relation of language to politics, culture, and history” (McGrath 545). Through the texts of Wilde and Shaw, the Irish theatre of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries would act as a medium for both representing and reconciling Ireland’s shifting political climate and devolving relationship with Britain.

As “a site of social and political contest” (Trotter 7), the Irish theatre has represented a strong and dynamic voice in Ireland’s ongoing attempts to create community through language, especially during the expansive period covered by Trotter. Trotter places Irish theatre at the center of what Foster labels “modern Ireland” (3), a period that begins in 1600 and ends in 1972, largely based on fluctuations in political, social and national perspectives, as well as a series of shifting “reigns, administrations, and battles” (Foster 3) within the boundaries of both Ireland and England. Yet perhaps more importantly, “modern Ireland” represents a series of historical moments in which questions of national and linguistic identity become inextricably tied to the exploration of Ireland’s British counterpart as both antagonistic to and yet provocative of the discovery of the Irish self, for as Wilde and Shaw suggest, modern Ireland could not deny the influence of England on the formation of Irish identity, nor should it.

Rather, Wilde argues, “‘It is only by contact with the art of foreign nations that the art of a country gains that individual and separate life that we call nationality . . .’” (qtd. in Kiberd 48), a view that, once again, echoes the notion that language creates

community since, for Wilde as for Shaw, “Identity was dialogic; the other was . . . the truest friend, since it was from that other that a sense of self was derived” (Kiberd 48). For each playwright, this process involves an honest and open exploration of the Irish self as not only inherently malleable but also shaped and defined by its dialogic encounters with the British “other,” a perspective which ultimately echoes Mikhail Bakhtin’s analysis of language as inherently dialogic, centered in those “struggle[s] among socio-linguistic points of view, not an intra-language struggle between individual wills or logical contradictions” (273). In this sense, the British “other” operates less as a direct antithesis of the Irish self than as a spur to the process of self-individuation, a perspective not wholly removed from Sheridan’s own claims that following “Nature,” or establishing a “natural” voice, means both “recognizing and expressing that which . . . [is] typical and customary in nature and human experience,” and engaging in a “performance governed by rules based upon order, regularity, and patterns of common acceptance” (Vandraegen 59). Thus, in choosing to engage in an intimate dialogue with England, Wilde and Shaw encourage the reemergence of elocutionary theory and practice to aid them in revising certain aspects of what it means to be a sincere performer.

Both playwrights seem to take “pleasure in the fact that identity is seldom straightforward and given, [but] more often a matter of negotiation and exchange” (Kiberd 1), making the polarized view of the British “other” difficult to maintain (Kiberd 48). Instead, Wilde and Shaw place England and Ireland in a complex dialogic relationship, arguing for such an engagement as not only beneficial but necessary to

establishing an Irish national identity, an argument that Friel, writing at the time of the Northern Troubles—a time of considerable political and religious unrest in twentieth century Ireland—would later take up with considerable aplomb. Indeed, as Wilde's *The Importance of Being Earnest* (1895), Shaw's *Pygmalion* (1912), and Friel's *Translations* (1980) each make clear, the "Irish self" is not a static entity tied to the image of Ireland as a physical or geographically contained nation—the land, ravished by famine, disease, and wide-scale emigration no longer offered a safe harbor in which to build Irish identity. Rather, in each of the above mentioned plays, Irish identity becomes increasingly difficult to define or label in absolute terms, particularly if one views linguistic identity as intrinsically performative and politically motivated.

For this reason, the aforementioned plays by Wilde, Shaw and Friel present an important case study as all three plays focus not only on the ways in which language informs national and individual identity but also on the ways in which certain historical moments prompt a reemergence of those theories and practices that marked the success of elocution in the eighteenth century. Through a dialogic and performative encounter with the process of national identity formation, Wilde, Shaw and Friel each introduce a key tenet of elocutionary theory into their works: namely, that the speaker, in taking on certain performative elements of speech (that is, by taking on a new linguistic identity), gains the potential to maintain a strong identification with the state or nation while simultaneously extending himself to a larger, more encompassing audience.

We might recall Sheridan's suggestion that adherence to a standardized English language, and by default a national identity, ultimately promotes individual self-

actualization and national unification (*British Education* 13). Through this process, a strong sense of community is engendered on both the national and universal level, allowing these individuals to become “good members of the universal society of mankind; and . . . fram[ing] their minds in such a manner, as to make them most useful to that society to which they more immediately belong” (Sheridan *British Education* 13). Thus, for Sheridan, the process of an Irishman or woman’s assimilation to the British way of life becomes largely a form of educational and national engagement and, to an extent, professionalization, a perspective both embraced and altered in the works of Wilde, Shaw and Friel as each playwright extends and ultimately tests the limits of this rhetorical doctrine.

Each playwright specifically explores England, and the English language, as a kind of liminal space in which Irishness becomes redefined through what Wilde might term the “mask” of Englishness (Kiberd 36); however, unlike the standard “mask,” the purpose of which is to conceal, deceive or camouflage, Wilde’s “mask” of Englishness becomes an illuminating element since, for Wilde, the process of taking on the habits and social perspectives of another culture, in this case the English culture, ultimately works to reject the “shallowness of such categories” as a “staged-Ireland” or a “staged-England,” insisting instead on the parodical possibilities of both the Irish and English identity (Kiberd 36). This process, Wilde implies, allows for a more authentic exploration of the self even as it requires assimilation into a role or culture apart from one’s home discourse. Thus, the “mask” becomes less a deceptive device than a means by which to try on and test a multitude of cultural identities, a process which, for Wilde,

ultimately *unmasks* the often “shallow” definitions of what it means to be associated with a particular national identity. Shaw and Friel pick up Wilde’s dialogue on the fluidity of national identity and, in a sense, mirror Wilde’s own exploration of what it means to be a sincere performer as both playwrights consider the necessity of linguistic standardization, arguing that, in the end, the speaker must take on and wield the oppressor’s language or culture in order to adequately challenge it.

While Friel prefers to situate this discussion in rural Ireland, no doubt harkening back to the De Valera dispensation¹ and, perhaps, recalling the “provincial” or “rustic” (*Lectures* 30) dialects so railed against in Sheridan’s *Lectures on Elocution*, Wilde and Shaw prefer to situate their discussions of linguistic and national identity in the bourgeois drawing rooms of English society, a location that allows Ireland the room for both distance and retrospection, while also forcing the Irish into dialogue with their British “foils” (Kiberd 9). In this setting, socio-linguistic discussions become intricately connected to the performative nature of social customs, as well as questions of social status and belonging, particularly in relation to one’s class and background. Setting the stage for Friel’s later discussion of Ireland’s linguistic assimilation to English, Wilde and Shaw both recognize the potential of taking on the English identity or “mask” as a means by which to explore and ultimately dismantle the stereotypes and prejudices that informed views of both Englishness and Irishness.

¹ In his chapter on “The De Valera Dispensation,” Foster outlines Éamon de Valera’s 1930s vision for Ireland, which consists of “small agricultural units, each self-sufficiently supporting a frugal family; industrious, Gaelicist, and anti-materialist” (538). Inherent in de Valera’s vision is the conception of Ireland as a pure, self-motivating entity, independent of English influences and the constraints of industrial/urban values.

Wilde specifically argues that in leaving Ireland and assuming an English identity, one can engage in a “lifelong performance of ‘Englishness’ which . . . [acts as] a parody of the very notion. The ease with which Wilde effected the transition from stage-Ireland to stage-England was his ultimate comment on the shallowness of such categories” (Kiberd 36). In arguing for the necessity of performance, particularly in relation to taking on the “mask of Englishness,” Wilde argues for the acquisition of a second, or even multiple identities. Through this process, Wilde implies that the speaker, having gained a multitude of voices, is able to experiment with the social, cultural and linguistic stereotypes or “categories” which define both his or her authentic and socially-constructed self in order to reassert a new, more versatile identity. In this sense, Wilde, and later Shaw, succeeds in bringing to the forefront many of the issues raised by Sheridan, namely: the performative aspects inherent in presenting an authentic or sincere self.

For Wilde, as for Shaw, the Irishman was often forced to leave Ireland in order to reach a more “authentic” “consciousness of himself” (Kiberd 48), as it was only *when* an Irishman was forced to leave Ireland that he discovered his true or authentic self, a statement of considerable consequence in the shadow of the diaspora that followed the Great Famine. Lending a voice to those who left Ireland for England, Wilde and Shaw suggest that, rather than providing a staging ground for the presentation of Irishness as everything not-British, England offers a necessary location in which to test Irish national identity, “a laboratory in which . . . [one] could redefine what it meant to be Irish”

(Kiberd 51). In this sense, Wilde and Shaw mirror to a large degree Sheridan's own attempts to reconcile the needs of the individual with the larger national identity.

However, the means by which both playwrights test this theory of identity formation (or amalgamation, as the case may be) varies considerably as Wilde and Shaw hold oppositional views regarding the representation of individual character. While Shaw argues for a certain degree of "characterological" stability (Powell 10), Wilde sees the individual as inherently multiple and malleable, arguing that, in attempting to remain "true to a single self [s/he] . . . may be false to half a dozen other selves" (Kiberd 38), a dilemma exemplified in the character of Jack Worthing. In *The Importance of Being Earnest*,² Wilde presents us with a play that tests with considerable vigor "the nature of role-play, the relation of language to reality and the dualism of the self" (Hodgson 68), themes which pervade, or haunt as the case may be, Sheridan's elocutionary theory. *Earnest* takes up, and in many ways pushes, Sheridan's views of performance as a system which relies on the dichotomy between the authentic self and what is often viewed as the performative self, though Wilde suggests that the authentic self *is* the performative self and that the attempt to maintain an "authentic" or "natural" identity is not only impossible, but insincere—"a difficult pose to keep up" (Wilde 245).

As with Sheridan, Wilde centers his exploration of identity on language, suggesting that the speaker's sincere performance relies heavily on his or her ability to wield rhetoric and to mirror back to the audience the image of the speaker that they desire or expect to see. In this sense, Wilde presents, and to a degree revises, the image

² Hereafter *Earnest*

sincere performance without a clear understanding of how one's emotions and experiences are best performed before an audience.

Indeed, we might recall Lionel Trilling's argument that the process of presenting a sincere self entails a certain degree of role playing since, in order to show "that we actually are what we want our community to know we are . . . we play the role of being ourselves, we sincerely act the part of the sincere person, with the result that a judgment may be passed upon our sincerity that it is not authentic" (11). Still, Wilde pushes this view a bit further as Cecily and Gwendolen imply that performance—"style, not sincerity"—is what ultimately wins the audience, for what is sincerity but a pose? Thus, the "sincere" performer must be adept at mimicking the stylistic expectations of the audience, viewing sincerity as a kind of stylistic mask. Of course, there remains the possibility, if not probability, that Gwendolen's assertion is meant to be read ironically, forcing audiences to once again question the stability of even this linguistic paradigm, particularly since, under Sheridan, sincerity remains the essential element to a successful performance. Still, even read satirically, this dialogue emphasizes the core principles inherent in Sheridan's sincere performer, asserting that the speaker acknowledge the importance of recognizing those demands made on his or her sincerity by the audience; in doing so, the speaker not only gains the ability to perform according to audience expectations of style and sincerity but also becomes adept at negotiating his or her public and private persona in order to dispel and at times subvert dominant views of what constitutes authenticity.

Thus, for Wilde, the process of becoming “Earnest” remains intrinsically based not only on the external demands of the audience but on the internal demands of the self, a paradoxical device in the hands of Wilde, no doubt, but an important one as Wilde seems to suggest that earnestness is fluid or, perhaps more accurately, that “earnestness” does not exist in the true sense of the word. Rather, to be “earnest” requires the acceptance of the self as inherently performative, a process that for many prompts an image of the individual as insincere. Yet, as Elizabeth Burns suggests, “People inhabit many social worlds, each of which is a construct . . . the behaviour that takes place in any of these worlds can appear theatrical to those observers who are not participants or to those newcomers who are just learning the rules. They are accurately aware of the element of composition in the management of sequences of action, which the participants may feel to be spontaneous” (13). This point is exemplified in Jack who, though he believes himself to be spontaneously performing Ernest[ness], finds that Ernest reflects, in actuality, a deeply engrained aspect of Jack’s internal composition and that his construction of self, once believed to be a process of identity management, has rendered him sincere. Gwendolen, as the outside “observer,” seems more in tune with this fact than Jack:

JACK: Gwendolen, it is a terrible thing for a man to find out suddenly
that all his life he has been speaking nothing but the truth. Can
you forgive me?

GWENDOLEN: I can. For I feel that you are sure to change. (Wilde 93)

Jack's concern over his potential sincerity, while no doubt comical, suggests the terrifying reality of being "natural;" to be sincere is, Wilde suggests, the ultimate pose or construct, for as Burns makes clear, there is a thin line between self-perceived spontaneity and theatricality. Thus, sincerity becomes a startling and rather unwelcome revelation for Ernest/Jack.

However, Gwendolen assures Jack that he will not remain in this seemingly stable state for long, stating that he is "sure to change," and suggesting that the self is constantly in flux and therefore subject to revision. Thus, by the close of the play we are assured that Jack/Ernest will undergo a further series of transformations, a revelation that puts Jack at ease and forces the audience to recognize the impossibility of maintaining a core or "authentic" self free from influence or transformation. Rather, for Wilde, to be authentic or sincere is to employ a multitude of voices. By representing his characters as experimenting with "earnestness," Wilde not only forces us to recognize the "difficult pose" that sincerity requires but also "creates a spectacle of people seeking control over their lives by creating double identities" (Hodgson 66), a perspective which takes Sheridan's own views of sincere performativity to their extreme limits, and revises eighteenth century elocution for a new historical moment.

Wilde's seemingly extreme insistence on the necessity of the performative self ultimately allows for the dual identity of the nineteenth century Irishman, who, often faced with necessary emigration, was forced to accept Irish identity as malleable and increasingly divided among a variety of landscapes, an identity no longer tied to the idealized image of rural Ireland. Writing in the shadow of the Great Famine, Wilde,

“was interested in the subversive potential of a theatricality which caused people to forget their assigned place and to assert the plasticity of social conditions” (Kiberd 38), suggesting that “a person went out to the other and returned with a self, getting to know others simply to find out what they think of him or herself” (Kiberd 48). Read in this light, Wilde would seem to revise Sheridan’s definition of theatricality as a process by which the speaker attempts to imitate the pronunciation of others as opposed to drawing from his or her own experiences of “private discourse” (*Lectures* 54) in order to perform those emotions before an audience. Whereas for Sheridan theatricality represents an inherently false process, resulting in the speaker’s separation from his true national identity and his ability to communicate on a universal level, for Wilde national identity is *necessarily* theatrical, and often requires the willingness of the speaker to acknowledge his or her own role, and the role of others, in the construction of that identity.

Kerry Powell argues this point specifically, noting that “the theatricality that Arnold and Victorians generally feared as deadening to the ‘soul’ was embraced by Wilde precisely because it freed him from the structures of fixed truth, opening new worlds of possibility for the individual” (4). These possibilities became essential to the Irish following the Great Famine as Ireland could no longer claim a stable or authentic identity predicated on the permanence of the land. Rather, in the face of wide scale emigration, the Irish were often forced to accept their national identity as inherently split between the “values, beliefs, and influence of the farming class” and the increased necessity of settling in urban areas (Foster 344). Wilde’s play, though performed in

England, effectively depicts this dichotomy between the city and the country, while simultaneously considering the effects that each has on the individual and national identity. While *Earnest* offers little direct commentary on the Irish diaspora following the Famine, the play reflects, in a sense, the deep split between the Irish “home” self and the Irish “displaced” self created through the often necessary assimilation to Englishness. Early on in Wilde’s play, we learn that Jack “is Ernest in town and Jack in the country” (Wilde 12), a statement which immediately conjures images of post-Famine Ireland, a landscape which, according to Kiberd, was affected not only agriculturally but culturally and linguistically by patterns of displacement, exile, and wandering.

Indeed, Kiberd states that amid the locations affected by the Famine, “Irish-speaking areas were among the hardest hit, with the result that only a quarter of the population was recorded as speaking the language after 1851” (21). As Kiberd’s summation suggests, the Irish language had remained, for the most part, an aspect of rural life, one quickly abandoned with the increase of poverty and emigration during the famine as rural Ireland suffered and eventually crumbled under the weight of a *laissez-faire* economic policy. Thus, if we view the city as a representative of the shifting Irish identity following the collapse of Ireland’s rural communities, as well as the linguistic shifts that occurred following the famine, Jack’s statement that he is “Ernest in town” becomes slightly ironic, perhaps suggesting that rural Ireland no longer offers a stable location on which to base an “authentic” identity, but rather represents a shifting “centre” (Conroy 66) that ties the emigrant to his past, but which can no longer offer a stable or clearly defined image of selfhood.

Rather, scholars argue that this split, predicated on increased emigration from rural Ireland to various American and British cities, often rendered the Irish condition inherently liminal, a psychological position which, as James C. Conroy suggests, places the Irish community in a dialogue with what he identifies as the “centre,” in this case, rural Ireland, a point of contact that, while placed at a relative distance, maintains a hold on the individual even once he or she has traveled outside its parameters: “The liminal community sits, at least psychologically, at a remove from the normative demands of the centre but is not detached from it. It experiences itself as at the threshold and is generally so construed by the centre. This condition is most clearly seen in migrant groups such as the Irish Diaspora of the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth-century” (Conroy 66). Though Conroy does not go into detail on the intricacies of the Irish case following this assertion, the connections are, as he implies, easily made. The Irish Diaspora, apart from placing the Irish in a liminal position, complicated the image of Ireland as the “centre” of Irish identity since the once stable image of rural Ireland began to crumble under the weight of the Great Famine.

This liminal position was often ritualized by the “American wake” which became intricately connected to the process of emigration: “Before the emigrants left home, their friends and neighbors would gather on the last night before the departure to celebrate a ritual known as the American wake . . . like the Irish wake of the dead, this ritual was filled with both sadness and gaiety. But sadness was the prevailing emotion, for there was little chance that the emigrant would ever again return home” (Dolan 76). While this ritual focused on the sadness inherent in leaving Ireland, Wilde focuses on the innate

freedom of such departures. On the threshold of life and death, the Irish emigrant, at least from Wilde's perspective, becomes free to accept his or her liminality or split identity as a potentially liberating representation of Irishness. Irish identity becomes, in this case, inherently portable and flexible, capable of extending beyond the limited scope of rural Ireland. As Wilde suggests, "an Irishman only came to consciousness of himself as such when he left his country" (Kiberd 48), implying that in taking on the mask of Englishness, the Irishman began an important dialogue with the "centre," one which allowed him to maintain a strong identification with the past while also extending himself, and Irish identity as a whole, to a larger, more encompassing audience.

According to Powell, "the crux of . . . [Wilde's] play is whether Jack Worthing can autonomously enact himself through language and theatricality. Jack's dilemma—"I don't know who I really am"—provides an opportunity for self-definition, although in the end Jack reinvents himself within and through what he has opposed all along. Finally he is defined by his social and historical context as much as . . . he defines himself" (102). Indeed, as Jack states at the close of Wilde's play, "I've now realised for the first time in my life the vital Importance of Being Ernest" (93), a statement which brings us full circle. That Jack is, more or less, christened "Ernest" at the close of the play reminds us that Ernest[ness] is ultimately the façade. Thus, the "Importance of Being Ernest" is not the importance of coming to a point of authenticity through the unmasking of one's core or central being but rather understanding the self as poly vocal and inherently performative. Early at the start of Wilde's play, Jack insists that "If Gwendolyn accepts me, I am going to kill my brother [Ernest]" (15); yet Jack's attempt to kill Ernest, not

surprisingly, backfires, as, in Wilde's view, the other self cannot be killed off but must be embraced. As Powell asserts, "Jack Worthing, stands for the contingency of selfhood: lacking any characterological center of gravity, he makes and unmakes himself, exposing identity as anything but single and unitary—not an essence of the individual, and certainly not a soul, but rather the product of texts, rituals, and performance" (10-11). Thus, deception comes not from theatricality or performance, but rather from insisting on a singular self, a core self free from wearing a variety of masks. Ernest cannot be absolved or killed; he is too much a part of Jack, what allows Jack to be earnest. In this sense, Jack becomes the ultimate sincere performer since Jack's autonomy can only exist when he fully accepts his other self, rather than treating Ernest as a separate or fictional entity.

Thus, through the character of Jack/Ernest Worthing, Wilde reimagines and revises Sheridan's sincere performer, for while Sheridan sees the orator as not merely persuading his audience but rather performing for them the "natural" or "true" form of communication, Wilde rejects the possibility that a "natural" or "true" form of communication exists. Instead, Wilde implies that the speaker's only hope at sincerity is to embrace a multitude of voices or staged personas in order to test and ultimately debunk the "shallowness" of such façades (Kiberd 36), thereby asserting performance to be the *only* form of sincerity. In this way, the speaker comes to understand his or her own multiplicity and, thus, achieves earnestness. Yet, while Wilde views language and the self as inherently malleable and performative—performance being more authentic and effective than the "difficult pose" of being "sincere"—Shaw refuses to accept the

implied position in Wilde's play that "words, like people, are invested with perpetually shifting and unstable content that makes it impossible to say what they really and fixedly 'mean.'" (Powell 11), the premise upon which Jack Worthing is eventually able to recognize his own earnestness.

This is not to say, however, that Shaw's characters completely reject performativity. Rather, Shaw readily admits that "the conscious and concerted ability to imagine an identity, and then to enact it, is equally authentic and considerably more practical" than attempting to maintain an "un-self-conscious performance of self and nation" (Bohman-Kalaja 116); however, in order to succeed in this performance, Shaw suggests that the performer maintain a "characterological reality," something he felt Wilde was unable to provide in the character of Jack Worthing (Powell 101). While Jack presents an ever shifting image of the self, refusing to be limited by any one identity, Shaw's Eliza Doolittle proceeds through a series of changes but ultimately resists a complete and utter transformation into the "new Elizas" (Shaw 43) imagined for her by Higgins and Pickering. Instead, Eliza presents a core self even as she proceeds to alter her linguistic identity, allowing Shaw to represent Eliza as sincerely performative.

Eliza insists from the start that she is a "lady" (Shaw 8) and that all she requires from Higgins is the outward manifestation of that role. As Kimberly Bohman-Kalaja reminds us, Eliza "wants nothing more than to become a girl in a flower shop—an only slightly glorified version of her working-class self," (124). In taking on the linguistic standard touted by Higgins, Eliza resists altering her identity, retaining her own image of selfhood and using the linguistic "mask" of "proper" English simply as a mean by which

to fashion an outward image that ultimately allows her to accomplish her goals to become “a girl in a flower shop.” Thus, Shaw seems to imply that there remains a core of sincerity in Eliza as she refuses to adhere completely to the images of selfhood forced on her by Higgins and Pickering. In this sense, Eliza readily accepts language as inherently performative, and yet predicated on the internal demands of the speaker. Thus, while Shaw finds little force in Wilde’s overtly theatrical characterizations, he readily admits the potential in asserting oneself through the performativity of language, a process which allows Eliza to refashion herself to fit the outward role of a lady while also enabling Shaw to revive and revise elocutionary theory and practice as a means to challenge certain linguistic paradigms in Victorian England.

Wilde’s use of “England as a laboratory in which . . . [to] redefine what it meant to be Irish” (Kiberd 51) seems to have held a considerable appeal for Shaw and allowed him to test the limits of the English mask. Like Wilde, Shaw’s engagement with bourgeois English society suggests the necessary role of that society in constructing the Irish self, a factor which could no longer be ignored following the Great Famine. Indeed, as Trotter suggests, even those who remained in Ireland migrated eastward, rejecting the “more isolated and economically disadvantaged west” in favor of the east, which offered the “material comforts and social benefits of the ‘modern English’ ways” (8). This tendency to seek out the “comforts” of an Anglicized Ireland would spur serious and heated questions regarding Ireland’s evolving national identity, predicated increasingly on the British national culture.

Shaw, one could argue, sets out to explore the “‘modern English’ ways” by presenting both a mirror for English audiences and a modernized view of Irish identity as an English construct and vice versa. *Pygmalion*, though not set in Ireland, considers Irish national identity through the lens of a modern-day elocutionist (Henry Higgins), suggesting that in the face of growing national disunity following the Great Famine, Ireland’s role becomes two fold: on the one hand, Ireland, like Eliza, becomes charged with the task of expanding its voice through the acquisition of both the English language and culture; on the other hand, Shaw insists that this assimilation become a process of critical self-reflection, one that allows the sincere performer to unveil and ultimately manipulate the very conventions that might otherwise represent an oppressive entity. In this way, Shaw mirrors and ultimately revives elocutionary theory and practice as a means by which to reassert the Irish national identity through linguistic assimilation and performance.

Eliza exemplifies this process. Though initially restricted by the linguistic constructs placed on her by Higgins, she ultimately “gains an accent . . . and with such trappings . . . become[s] more than capable of playing the social roles of [a] lady” (Mugglestone 379) even to the point of reinventing the language she is charged with learning. Indeed, Bohman-Kalaja argues that through the course of *Pygmalion*, Shaw readily engages in a constant evaluation of the self as a social construct, focusing specifically on “the way in which character and personality can be constructed and reconstructed and how such reconstructions are themselves potentially authentic” (111). Higgins directs this process initially, playing the role of a modern Pygmalion by taking it

upon himself to reconstruct Eliza's identity according to a prescribed linguistic paradigm, positioning himself as a twentieth-century elocutionist, and remaking and restaging Eliza for what he sees as a more universally accepted audience.

Higgins's brand of elocution, not unlike Sheridan's, is based on both a neo-classical and romanticist view of language. Specifically, Higgins echoes Sheridan's arguments that the English language, if wielded correctly, offers the individual a chance at civic virtue and social success since, for Sheridan as for Higgins, "pronunciation . . . [represents] a distinguishing mark of different classes" (*Lectures* 30). Thus, in attempting to create "a uniformity of pronunciation," both elocutionists choose for their model the "polite pronunciation" of the court, since "all other dialects, are sure marks, either of a provincial, rustic, pedantic, or mechanical education; and therefore have some degree of disgrace annexed to them" (Sheridan, *Lectures* 30). Higgins takes this view to heart and, aside from promising Eliza the linguistic skills of a duchess, attempts to impress upon her the civic virtues of "polite pronunciation" while also expounding on her civic duty as a speaker of English, a duty which, according to Higgins, carries universal ramifications:

THE NOTE TAKER: A woman who utters such depressing and disgusting sounds has no right to be anywhere—no right to live. Remember that you are a human being with a soul and the divine gift of articulate speech: that your native language is the language of Shakespeare and Milton and The Bible; and don't sit there crooning like a bilious pigeon. (Shaw 8)

Though perhaps an over-dramatization of elocution, Higgins presents a relevant, if slightly revised, version of Sheridan's own views on what it means to be a sincere performer, a role which Eliza takes on only to further revise Higgins's own interpretation of linguistic performance. Rendering Eliza animalistic and essentially soulless for her linguistic "crooning," Higgins echoes Sheridan's own arguments against "provincial, rustic, [and] pedantic" (*Lectures* 30) dialects, suggesting that in order to become human, in order to deserve a place in the universal community, the speaker must first recognize those "good members of the universal society of mankind" (Sheridan *British Education* 13) and then attempt to emulate them.

Thus, it is not surprising that, in the context of this passage, language becomes both liberating and oppressive, as Eliza is presented with the canonical texts of Shakespeare, Milton, and The Bible as exemplars of civic virtue. Yet, Higgins, it would seem, denies the very essence that makes such performances "sincere" as he leaves Eliza little room for critical self-reflection, insisting on his own narrow model of expression as truth. Contrary to Sheridan's rejection of "theatrical declamation" (*Lectures* 54), Higgins sets out to create "new Elizas" (Shaw 43), a process that renders Higgins's student nothing more than a performer, at least initially. However, Eliza soon realizes that linguistic authenticity and power is to be found in the romantic aspects of elocution, an aspect of Sheridan's theory that Higgins somewhat overlooks. Indeed, through Eliza, Shaw revises, to a degree, Higgins's and Sheridan's theories on elocution, choosing to endorse the importance of engaging a multitude of voices over Higgins's and Sheridan's insistence on "polite pronunciation" as the root of self-individuation. Rather, Shaw

remains intent on exposing speech as not only inherently malleable but material to the outward construction of the self, as both Higgins and Pickering clearly demonstrate the ability of speech to act as a marker of class, a perspective that ultimately reveals what Wilde might term the “shallowness” (Kiberd 36) of speech since, in Shaw’s world, language can be worn and cast aside much the same way clothing can. Thus, Higgins does not necessarily speak for Shaw so much as he offers Shaw a paradigm through which to revive, challenge and in some ways revise eighteenth century elocution.

According to Sheridan, the sincere speaker must remain aware of and continually reflect upon his individual thoughts, feelings, and sentiments in order to effectively command an audience, an aspect of elocution which confirms the romantic self as necessary to the success of the sincere performer (*Lectures* 70). Thus, as Vicki R. Kennel suggests, for all of Higgins’s schooling, Eliza already possesses the attributes necessary to assimilate and to become a sincere performer, a point that ultimately allows her to reject Higgins’ attempts at mastery; specifically, Kennel argues that “Eliza’s own observations, for instance, of how Pickering’s treatment of people differs from Higgins’s provide her with more insight into quality social interactions than do Higgins’s directives on behavior” (74). While Higgins understands the beauty and power of speech, he cannot see beyond his own ideals of mastery and creation, assuming that the power of speech lies in the speaker’s willingness to mimic Higgins’s own interpretation of correct English and the accompanying gesticulations, and giving little or no credence to the speaker’s individual experience as crucial to the process of linguistic persuasion. For Sheridan, such a practice represents “theatrical declamation” (*Lectures* 54) and not

sincere performativity. Eliza, eventually recognizing language as a construction of the self, rejects Higgins's version of the sincere performer, and "theatrical declamation," asserting a new identity free from Higgins, thereby reconstructing his rather limited linguistic paradigm.

Eliza's first foray into the linguistic landscape of the English parlor room suggests that it is she, wielding a new knowledge of Englishness as a social role, who ultimately has the power to construct and reconstruct English identity. Entering Mrs. Higgins's at-home circle, Eliza succeeds in presenting the image of a refined lady, captivating Mrs. Higgins's guests with both her refined looks and her "new small talk" (Shaw 39):

FREDDY (*opening the door for her*): Are you walking across the park,
Miss Doolittle? If so—

ELIZA: Walk! Not bloody likely. (*Sensation*). I am going in a taxi. (*She goes out*).

(PICKERING *gasps and sits down*. FREDDY *goes out on the balcony to catch another glimpse of Eliza*)

MRS. EYNSFORD HILL (*suffering from shock*): Well, I really can't get used to the new ways.

CLARA (*throwing herself discontentedly into the Elizabethan chair*): Oh, it's all right, mamma, quite right. People will think we never go anywhere or see anybody if you are so old-fashioned. (Shaw 40)

While Higgins attempts to reform and refashion Eliza according to his own standards of linguistic virtue, Eliza quickly establishes her own paradigm of self expression, creating “a new small talk” (Shaw 39) and hence suggesting the malleability of Higgins’s seemingly stable linguistic identity.

Indeed, while Higgins attempts to impress upon Eliza the permanence of Shakespeare, Milton, and The Bible, Eliza just as quickly asserts the inherent fallibility of the English language, introducing new terms and captivating the younger members of Higgins’s “proper” audiences. In this sense, Eliza’s speech reveals the performativity of language, captivating her audience with her gestures and “exquisite” dress (Shaw 38). Prior to Eliza’s introduction of the “new small talk,” we are told that “*as she enters*” Mrs. Higgins’s at-home circle, “*all rise, quite fluttered*” by her appearance (Shaw 38). However, it soon becomes apparent that what Eliza offers Mrs. Higgins’s guests and her English audience is nothing more than a “costume” (Bohman-Kalaja 119), of which her language is a part. As Bohman-Kalaja argues that “Shaw’s achievement . . . [rests on] the way in which Eliza’s speech functions as part of her costume” (119). This costume of language, we quickly learn, is worn, or at the very least desired, by other characters as well, a point which, again, suggests the inherent performativity of language, for as Clara asserts, without the “costume” of the “new small talk,” she and her mother will be rendered out of fashion.

By placing Eliza in a position whereby she must chose between authenticity in exchange for her willing assimilation to bourgeois English, Shaw not only considers the degree to which the individual is made “sincere” through the performance of language

but also interrogates the dismissal of various dialects as “provincial, rustic, [or] pedantic” (*Lectures* 30), an interrogation that, while explored through the cockney accent of Shaw’s English flower girl, carried immediate ramifications for the nineteenth-century Irish speaker who, according to Bohman-Kalaja, had “captured the Victorian imagination” (119). Eliza embodies those characteristics frequently assigned by British audiences to the Irish race through her enactment of “the poor, excitable, filthy woman, whose imagined persecutions indicate a childish naïveté manifested as a lack of understanding of the world around her” (Bohman-Kalaja 119), traits often associated with the Irish other. Specifically, C.H. Bretherton suggests that the Irish were often viewed by Victorian audiences as ““basely superstitious, callous to suffering, credulous, excitable, thriftless, untruthful, dirty, pettily dishonest, destructive, cunning, imitative, tortuous, devoid of moral courage and intensely vain”” (Bretherton qtd. Bohman-Kalaja 118). Thus, through his initial description of Eliza, Shaw effectively conjures up Sheridan’s own dismissal of “rustic” and “provincial” dialects as inherently false, placing Higgins in a position to, more or less, authenticate Eliza, and Ireland, through linguistic standardization.

However, in aligning Eliza with the English view of Irishness, Shaw also encourages Ireland to dismantle the mask of Englishness as Eliza’s eventual reconstruction of the language, her ability to use her newly obtained linguistic knowledge against Higgins, allows her to assert a new identity and to ultimately manipulate audiences through both dialects, enabling her to become a willing participant in Higgins’s linguistic “game” (Shaw 62). Thus, Shaw suggests that Eliza’s willingness

to assimilate does not negate her “authentic” voice, but rather allows her to gain access and ultimately subvert the mask of Englishness, a position of power that could not be gained without the willing assimilation to Higgins’s linguistic paradigm. In this sense, Eliza in many ways exemplifies Sheridan’s ideal student who, while able to wield the correct form of English, must also consider and reflect upon his or her own habits of speech and communication in order to present an authentic image of the self, one free of all signs of theatricality and reflexive of “the immediate sentiments of his [or her] own mind” (*Lectures* 70). However, Eliza expands considerably on Sheridan’s views of language, taking the romantic aspects of elocution to their limits and ultimately deconstructing the universality or “sincerity” of standard English, suggesting instead that “polite pronunciation” becomes merely another tool by which to construct one’s performance for a variety of audiences.

Thus, for Shaw as for Wilde, language offers a means by which to reinvent the self, for “if the individual and the world are substantially (though not entirely) constituted through language and if, therefore, ‘identity’ and ‘reality’ represent fictional constructs that continually elude full representation, then the possibility remains that both the individual and the social reality in which he is inscribed can be reinvented” (Andrews 164). This perspective has not only political but social and historical ramifications for Wilde and Shaw’s native Ireland, both past and present. Indeed, Wilde and Shaw’s revival and revision of eighteenth century elocutionary theory and practice for their modern audiences has allowed contemporary Irish writers such as Brian Friel to engage in similar discussions of authenticity, national identity and performance. This

contemporary refashioning of elocutionary theory is well exemplified through Friel's *Translations*, which further revives and revises eighteenth century elocutionary theory in order to address conflicts over the nature of national identity and linguistic authenticity. However, while Wilde's *The Importance of Being Earnest* and Shaw's *Pygmalion* each emphasizes the role of the sincere performer, Friel's *Translations* also focuses on what it means to take up "guardian[ship]" (Sheridan, *British Education* 246) of one's language, as a safeguard of one's national identity.

Translations, apart from presenting a "key transitional moment when Irish gave way to English" (Pelletier 68), is the foundational text of the Field Day Theatre Company, founded in 1980 "when the . . . political crisis in Northern Ireland was already twelve years old" (Deane 6). Thus, the objective of Friel and Field Day is, F.C. McGrath argues, to shed light on those myths and "prejudices that divide the country today" (534), replacing them with "new ones that are free from the colonial perspectives . . . that have encased Ireland's history for the past eight hundred years" (535). With this agenda in mind, McGrath argues that Friel's and Field Day's goals were both political and epistemological (535) and that Friel's *Translations* "became the crucible in which various elements of his outlook on language, fiction, and history fused" (541); in this sense, Friel's text presents an ideal example of the ways in which elocutionary theory lends itself to illuminating certain historical moments.

Specifically, the Northern Troubles—a moment of political upheaval beginning, as Seamus Deane suggests, in the late 1960s (Deane 6) and, more or less, ending with the approval of the "Good Friday" referendum in 1998 (Hoppen 231)—aside from

pitting nationalists against unionists, and Catholics against Protestants, would once again revive the need to consider language as deeply relevant to Ireland's "politics, culture and history" (McGrath 545). In his text *Wars of Words: The Politics of Language in Ireland 1537-2004*, Tony Crowley argues that the division of Ireland under the Government of Ireland Act in 1920 meant that "the Irish language was seen on both sides of the border as a symbol of nationalist . . . aspirations" (180-181). The Protestant North was to be, according to Crowley, "an English-speaking state for British people" (181). Thus, it is not surprising that Friel's *Translations*, written amid this debate, met with considerable controversy. As Shaun Richards points out, for many critics, Friel's play, which considers the colonization of the Irish language through the renaming of Ireland's geographic locations, takes a decidedly nationalist perspective and neglects to show "the complex reality of internal Irish demands for Anglicization" (Richards 268), placing Ireland in the role of victim and Friel on the side of the nationalists.

However, while critics such as Sean Connolly dismiss *Translations* as presenting "an artificial contrast between the hopelessly idealized [Irish] and the hopelessly debased [British]" (44), represented by the character of Lancey, Elmer Andrews argues that the proverbial "serpent has already entered the Gaelic Eden before the arrival of Lancey and his men. Maire, the principle female character, is anxious to learn English to further her hopes of leaving Baile Beag and going to America and she adduces the teachings of Daniel O'Connell in her support" (171). In doing so, Maire adds a decidedly nationalist political fervor to her demands, though it is important to note that Maire refuses to play the role of victim. Rather, Maire argues that the future of Ireland rests in its ability to

negotiate and accept the malleability of Irish linguistic and national identity. Thus, to relegate *Translations* to the role of a strictly nationalist text intent on demonizing the British and victimizing the Irish is to deny not only the complexity of the text itself but the text's argument as a whole. While Deane willingly asserts that "Field Day's analysis" of the Northern Troubles "derives from the conviction that it is, above all, a colonial crisis" (6), Friel's *Translations* does not, necessarily, place itself firmly in the nationalist camp, choosing instead to revive Wilde and Shaw's view of England along with elocutionary theory and practice as a means by which to argue for the English language as necessary to the recreation of Ireland.

Read in this light, it is not surprising that, like Wilde and Shaw, Friel chooses to stage his drama for a decidedly English speaking audience, at least in terms of language, as he writes the entire play in the English vernacular, despite its assertion that many of the characters in the play, Maire being one of them, are Irish speakers. In staging his play in English, Friel picks up the discussions of Wilde and Shaw in order to consider the ways in which language constructs national and individual identity, once again placing Ireland in dialogue with its British counterpart. Therefore, while some critics have suggested that Friel's fixation on language represents "a general retreat by modern Irish writers from the political complexities of modernity into a more private domain of language" (Kiberd 615), Friel's focus on language actually succeeds in prompting what Kiberd terms "an investigation into the depths of the political unconscious" (615), suggesting that the play acts as a "reminder that it is Irish, and not English people, who have the power to decide what language is spoken in Ireland" (Kiberd 616). Read from

this perspective, Friel rejects the image of the victimized Irishman or woman. Instead, Friel argues that the Irish retain a certain degree of agency in their assimilation to English, that this is more a choice than mere victimization, a sentiment that would seem to echo Wilde's, and to an extent Shaw's, own assertions regarding the flexibility and potentiality of the English "mask."

In choosing to assimilate to the English language, Friel's characters, not unlike Eliza Doolittle or Jack Worthing, gain the ability to reconstruct not only their own identities, but the British identity as well, assuming the linguistic mask of the oppressor in order to debunk and deconstruct the somewhat foreign national identity that, for all intents and purposes, has come to represent them. In this sense, Friel, like Wilde, argues that the process of "seeing . . . the entire world through the other's eyes. . . [becomes] an essential process in the formation of a balanced individual" (Kiberd 48), with identity becoming "predicated on difference" (Kiberd 49) and agency resting on one's ability to both recognize and perform according to the linguistic constructs of the "other." If Higgins refers to the mask of Englishness as a kind of "game" (Shaw 62) for Friel's characters it becomes an outright linguistic war, for as Friel seems to suggest, the Irish possess, through their willing assimilation, the ability to reconstruct both English and Irish national identities.

Elocution is, thus, a potentially liberating system in Friel's Ireland, as many of the characters consider the extent to which the acquisition and performance of English allows not only for social and political mobility but also national reconstruction. Sheridan argues that "the body of the people become the guardians of their language, as

well as their liberties, and it is observable that they both fell together” (*British Education* 246). As “guardians of their language” Sheridan’s ideal speakers become national representatives of the state, lending their individual voices to the larger communicative whole in order to affect and promote linguistic, political and social stability. Furthermore, in guarding the language, “the body of the people” are better able to guard their “liberties” suggesting that there is both security and freedom in merging with the national identity through language.

For Friel’s characters, the question then becomes: which language to guard? Hugh’s hedge-school, intent on guarding the languages of the past (most notably Latin and Greek), has committed itself to guarding dead languages, and it is implied that Irish is soon to follow in this tradition, as the cartography of Yolland and Owen makes clear:

YOLLAND’s official task, which OWEN is now doing, is to take each of the Gaelic names—every hill, stream, rock, even every patch of ground which possessed its own distinctive Irish name—and Anglicise it, either by changing it into its approximate English sound or by translating it into English words. (Friel 34)

It is difficult not to see the map of Ireland here as a visual embodiment of elocutionary theory, particularly given Miller’s assertion that “while Sheridan and other elocutionists valorized speech as the natural language of the passions, they programmatically set out to ‘methodize the whole of the English language’ by establishing written rules to govern oral expression (*Plan of Education* xviii)” (Miller 119). Indeed, according to Martine Pelletier “The Ordnance Survey map acts as a powerful metaphor of the transformation

of . . . [Ireland's] linguistic and cultural environment. Irish loses the ability to describe what is, and becomes, like Latin and Greek, a language that is only capable of saying what used to be" (68). Thus, civic virtue as promoted by elocutionary theory—a process of “recognizing and expressing that which . . . [is] typical and customary in nature and human experience,” and engaging in a “performance governed by rules based upon order, regularity, and patterns of common acceptance” (Vandraegen 59)—becomes tied to a shifting set of place names, showing the arbitrary nature of linguistic civic virtue.

As Owen and Yolland proceed to rename “every hill, stream, rock,” and piece of land, they systematically reinvent Ireland's national identity, a process that reconstructs what it means to be an Irish citizen and ultimately divides Hugh's group of learners, rendering those like Sarah and Manus (both of whom are unable or unwilling to accept this new influence) effectively mute or without country. As Sarah becomes indefinitely silent and Manus flees Baile Beag under a cloud of suspicion, it becomes clear that to guard the Irish language, or to subscribe to a fixed image of Irishness, is to commit oneself to a stifling, if not vanished, past and to remain in a kind of linguistic no man's land. Read in this light, Ireland's inhabitants have one of two options, Friel implies: either they reject the new national landscape or they assimilate to it and, in doing so, attempt to master and ultimately challenge the oppressor. Friel, it would seem, promotes the latter, suggesting that only through acquiring the language of the oppressive force can one hope to engage in a legitimate battle, an assertion that immediately places Friel's characters in the realm, if not dead center, of sincere performativity.

Like Wilde and Shaw, Friel offers his characters the chance at agency through the process of linguistic performance, suggesting that this process gives the speaker the tools not only to challenge and ultimately reject assimilationist views of language and stereotypical views of Irishness but to reconstruct and establish a new individual and national identity. In this way, Friel's characters take on sincere performativity as a means by which to gain access to the dominant culture and to, in a sense, redefine the standards that have, for all intents and purposes, evicted them from their homes, both physically and linguistically. Indeed, Friel seems to urge his characters to evolve with the new names and language introduced by the British soldiers, a process that ultimately prompts characters like Maire and Hugh to reject the notion that the "authentic" speaker maintains a core identity and instead to accept the "authentic" or "natural" speaker as multitudinous. In taking on the language of the oppressor, Marie and Hugh become not only "guardians" of their linguistic identities but "useful to that society to which they more immediately belong" (Sheridan, *British Education* 13).

Marie and Hugh, unlike Sarah and Manus, insist that Ireland, in order to maintain any kind of meaningful relationship with its past, must learn to acknowledge and ultimately accept those outside influences that have shaped its cultural and linguistic landscape. In doing so, Maire and Hugh argue that the Irish succeed not only in guarding their past but forging a future, a point emphasized in Maire's assertion that English represents not only Irish liberation, but personal freedom:

MAIRE: We should all be learning to speak English. That's what my
mother says. That's what I say. That's what Dan O'Connell said

last month in Ennis. He said the sooner we all learn to speak English, the better.

.....

And what he said was this: “The old language is a barrier to modern progress.” He said that last month. And he’s right. I don’t want Greek. I don’t want Latin. I want English. . . . I want to be able to speak English because I’m going to America as soon as the harvest’s all saved. (Friel 25-6)

In demanding English, Maire not only insists that the community of learners gathered in Hugh’s school must become “guardians of their [new] language” in order to move beyond the stagnant environment of Baile Beag, a landscape haunted by the “sweet smell” of a potential potato famine (Friel 21) but that in doing so, the Irish become better able to assert their freedom, to reject those “barrier[s]” or restrictions that keep them tied to an increasingly impoverished system.

In this sense, Maire echoes the arguments of Wilde and Shaw, and ultimately Sheridan, asserting that the speaker, in taking on a new linguistic identity, gains the ability not only to maintain a strong identification with the state or nation but to extend his or herself to a larger, more encompassing audience. Just as Shaw suggests that Eliza’s willingness to assimilate does not negate her “authentic” voice, but rather allows her to gain access and ultimately subvert the mask of Englishness, Maire argues that the future of Ireland rests in its ability to assert itself amidst the dominant culture, a move that requires both individual and national engagement. Still, while Maire attempts to

champion the national benefits of learning English, emphasizing the words of “the liberator”—Daniel O’Connell—in her defense (Friel 25), it soon becomes apparent that, for the most part, Maire echoes the romantic aspects of Sheridan’s sincere performer, arguing for linguistic performance as a means by which to propel the individual, for while Maire cites Daniel O’Connell as her inspiration, reminding the students of Hugh’s hedge school of their national duty (Friel 25), Maire ties her own aspirations to her own personal drive to leave Ireland and, eventually, to continue a relationship with Yolland.

Conversely, Hugh offers audiences a more civic representation of language acquisition since, as the teacher of the hedge-school, Hugh is charged with the “fram[ing] of [his students’] minds” and the “shap[ing] of their talents” (Sheridan, *British Education* 13), a process that, as Maire suggests, requires Hugh to abandon his own interests in Latin and Greek and to, instead, teach English to his students. In this sense, Hugh offers Friel’s readers an image of the civically minded sincere performer. Hugh comes to the specific realization that, in order to avoid becoming a dead civilization, the Irish must relearn their country according to the linguistic identity represented in the newly assigned place names: “We must learn where we live. We must learn to make them our own. We must learn to make them our new home” (Friel 66). Through this argument, Hugh readily models for his students the processes necessary to their success in “that society to which they more immediately belong” (Sheridan, *British Education* 13). Therefore, we might see Hugh’s vision for Ireland as reflective not only of Friel’s but of Sheridan’s view of what it means to model sincere performativity as well as civic virtue. Hugh, though “he espouses the dead and dying tongues . . .

possesses, and can use, the inner strength to resolve their [his students'] crises. He admits the situation, and . . . he is willing to aid . . . those frightened children like Maire who need to learn a new song, in order to recapture faith" (Pine 176). Therefore, if, as Sheridan suggests, the speaker's role is to model for his or her audiences the necessity of sincere performativity in creating "good men" (*British Education* 13), Hugh offers a direct representation of the sincere performer, reflecting upon and presenting sincere aspects of himself in order to offer his students or audience that image which they have come to view as authentic or necessary to their own linguistic identity. Read in this light, it is somewhat appropriate that we should end the play with Hugh's viewpoint, as it is from this perspective that the most is to be gained for the Irish, particularly if we view *Translations* as an embodiment of Hugh's argument.

In performing the Irish language through the medium of English, Friel draws attention to the ability of Irish dramatists to restage the linguistic war between Ireland and England in order to assert and model a new, and increasingly versatile identity. Friel's *Translations*—in taking up the position of sincere performativity—renders Ireland a sincerely performative nation, capable of taking on the English language and performing to the standards of both its English and Irish audiences, a process that ultimately revives and revises eighteenth century elocution for a twentieth century audience. Furthermore, in presenting a staged Irish community in the English tongue, Friel demonstrates the power inherent in performing Englishness, suggesting, like Hugh, that in order to create an identity that reaches beyond the limited scope of Ireland and England's linguistic war, to reach what Sheridan terms a "universal" audience (*British*

Education 13), Ireland has to assume a mastery over the English language. In doing so, Ireland's inhabitants ultimately reshape the English language to fit their own needs, thereby establishing a more versatile Irish identity and dismantling the seemingly stable force of England's linguistic presence. In this sense, *Hugh* works as an additional mouth piece for Friel. As Pelletier argues, "*Hugh*'s . . . recognition that the new English place names now make up the linguistic and cultural landscape is accompanied by an exhortation to appropriate these new unfamiliar names, to endow them with meaning, to make English identifiably Ireland's language," a process which Pelletier suggests "has been taken up as subsequent generations of Irish writers have given expression to that very discontinuity, turning the new vernacular into an adequate vehicle for creative expression, including Friel himself" (70-71). In this sense, Friel's play asserts itself as a challenge to the notion that in accepting Englishness, the Irish have accepted defeat.

In this way, Friel joins the ranks of writers such as Wilde and Shaw, playwrights who investigate the potential in viewing national identity as inherently malleable, "a matter of negotiation and exchange" (Kiberd 1). In taking up Sheridan's view of language as both a sincere and performative act, Wilde, Shaw and Friel consider the political and social relevance of elocutionary theory and practice, arguing for the necessary construction of a new linguistic identity for Ireland, one that allows for the construction and reconstruction of the self, particularly in moments of national instability. In placing England and Ireland in a complex dialogic relationship, all three playwrights consider the construction of national identity through linguistic performance, suggesting that, in the process of taking on another linguistic paradigm, the

speaker gains the ability to reflect upon his or her identity while also revealing the flaws inherent in the linguistic paradigm itself.

In this sense, each playwright frames elocution as a rhetorical theory ideally adapted to historical moments in which national identity, civic virtue and linguistic authenticity are questioned. These topics have continued to follow discussions of elocution, finding force in current discussions pertaining to contemporary composition and rhetoric. In this sense, sincere performativity should remain of particular interest to today's teachers of "elocution" as it occurs under the varied headings of rhetoric, literature and composition, for as Wilde, Shaw and Friel demonstrate, the underlying arguments and theories that construct elocution remain not only relevant but necessary to discussions of language acquisition, negotiation and exchange. This is particularly true in the culturally diverse writing classrooms of America, where we continually encounter and, to an extent, confront discussions of voice; cultural and linguistic identity; and performance. Thus, the works of Wilde, Shaw and Friel open the door to further discussions of elocutionary theory in relation to current discussions of linguistic performance and authenticity, providing a valuable case study for academics who wish to understand the versatility of Sheridan's sincere performer in order to reexamine performance as it exists in contemporary pedagogical theories and practices.

CHAPTER IV

“PERFORMANCE . . . [AS] A PARADIGM OF PROCESS”: REDEFINING
LINGUISTIC PERFORMANCE AND AUTHENTICITY IN THE CURRENT
COMPOSITION CLASSROOM

In his chapter entitled “The King’s English and the Classical Tradition in Ireland,” Thomas P. Miller begins an exploration of elocution with the following epigraph: “To lose your native language, and learn that of an alien, is the worst badge of conquest—it is the chain on the soul. To have lost entirely the national language is death; the fetter has worn through” (Thomas Davies qtd. in Miller 117). Under this epigraph, Miller seeks to define elocution as assimilationist, specifically arguing that in order to meet the standards of elocution, “provincials alienated themselves from the language and experience of their own society, leaving them able to speak like the English but unable to speak with their own people without grimacing in distaste at their corrupt language and barbarous manners” (139). Thus, Miller argues that, in promoting “formalize[d] English” (119), eighteenth century elocutionists seek to eradicate or put to “death” those native dialects that oppose the dominant culture in order to promote cultural assimilation, a process that ultimately results in linguistic and national alienation as well as victimization. In this sense, Miller’s argument against elocution becomes essential to his exploration of the formation of college English as he argues that “opposition of primitivism and propriety” set up by Sheridan and other eighteenth century elocutionists remains “central to the centrifugal and centripetal forces that

shaped the formation of college English as it worked to eradicate provincial traditions and instill a cosmopolitan sensibility” (139). However, in forging this connection, Miller oversimplifies a complex rhetorical history, denying the intricacies of eighteenth century elocution and its important parallels to contemporary debates over the role of voice, performance and authenticity in English studies, particularly in the context of the writing classroom.

Unfortunately, Miller’s assessment, though compelling, tends to make uniform a period that was considerably more complex than Miller’s analysis allows. Rather, Miller’s attempt to place Ireland in the role of passive victim, chained by the strictures of linguistic acculturation, oversimplifies the complex historical, political and cultural dynamics of eighteenth century Ireland and of the elocutionist movement in general. In placing the Irish in the role of passive victim, subject to the destructive whims of the elocutionary model, Miller specifically ignores the possibility that Ireland, in taking on the language of the oppressor, stood to gain a degree of linguistic mobility previously unavailable and particularly valuable in the face of agricultural and economic devastation, as well as large-scale immigration. Miller’s analysis tends to deny the complexity inherent in the Irish case, giving little credence to the agricultural, social, and political issues that shaped Ireland’s national/linguistic identity, and suggesting that the “provincial” Irish were, to a large degree, merely victims of the Anglo-Irish desire to assimilate to British culture.

Though this is certainly a feasible argument given Sheridan’s status as an Anglo-Irishman, Miller suggests that the “elocutionary movement . . . appealed most to those

whose language it set out to eradicate” (138), a statement which, perhaps contrary to Miller’s intentions, implicates the Irish in their own linguistic assimilation, suggesting a certain degree of agency otherwise ignored by Miller. Examined carefully, the Irish present a compelling case study of the ways in which linguistic performance—the process of taking on and playing out the linguistic standards of the other—allows the speaker to revise and subvert language from within the strictures of the dominant culture, while also reaffirming his or her own linguistic and cultural identity, for as Wilde argues: “Identity . . . [is] dialogic . . . the other was . . . the truest friend, since it was from that other that a sense of self was derived” (Kiberd 48). In refusing to acknowledge this possibility, Miller, and other contemporary critics, risk overlooking both the opportunities inherent in Sheridan’s arguments for sincere performativity and the potentiality of linguistic performance in reshaping the impact of standard English, not just for the Irish but for English studies in general.

For Miller, Sheridan offers an inauthentic view of language as inherently stylistic and theatrical, a perspective that, on the surface, seems to accurately define elocutionary theory, particularly given its emphasis on gesture and pronunciation. However, a deeper examination of Sheridan reveals the ways in which elocution has, for all intents and purposes, solved the often contentious debate between authentic and performative discourse as Sheridan, time and again, insists on the individual as sincerely performative, capable of appealing to audience through the process of critical self-reflection and individual growth. Heretofore, this thesis has advanced the argument that for Sheridan, sincere performativity represents a process wherein the speaker, understanding both the

demands of audience as well as his or her own internal demands or “immediate sentiments” (*Lectures* 70), develops a complex relationship between the private and the public self. In learning how to harness his or her own internal perspectives in order to present a sincere representation of the self to an outside audience, the speaker effectively offers the audience a model of sincere performativity, which the audience is then encouraged to emulate and revise according to its own “immediate sentiments.”

As Daniel E. Vandraegen suggests, this process of imitation is not meant to override the internal demands of the speaker. Rather, Sheridan “praises individuality and sincerity of communication when he declares that ‘he who speaks from his heart, can never fall into any absurdity in his manner; this is what they only are liable to, who adopt the manner of another’” (Sheridan qtd. Vandraegen 61), a statement that, once again, complicates the tendency to place Sheridan under the rather simple banner of assimilationist. While Sheridan certainly admits that the “chief end of all public speakers is to persuade,” he also adamantly insists that “the speaker should at least appear himself to believe, what he utters; but this can never be the case, where there are any evident marks of affection, or art” (*Lectures* 121). Thus, the speaker’s authenticity, his or her ability to reflect upon and project his or her heart-felt emotions, becomes essential to the civic virtue of both the speaker and the audience, particularly since Sheridan’s ideal student seeks to model this same process of sincere performativity for a larger audience in hopes of affecting national engagement and self-improvement through the process of observation and critical self-reflection.

Wilde, Shaw and Friel effectively put this theory of sincere performativity into action, and it is through their texts that contemporary scholars gain a glimpse into the potential of Sheridan's elocutionary theory. Specifically, the works of Wilde, Shaw and Friel, not unlike those of contemporary composition theorists and instructors, are predicated on the conflicts inherent in attempting to negotiate an authentic or sincere voice in the context of various political, social and linguistic upheavals. Demonstrating the versatility of Sheridan's sincere performer, Wilde, Shaw and Friel utilize these moments of political, social and linguistic conflict to present voice as intrinsically malleable, staging the construction of voice for a variety of audiences while also considering the practical applicability of performance to the sincere expression of self. Placing Irish identity in a dialogic, and at times performative, relationship with England, each playwright recasts elocutionary theory, validating the very practical aspects inherent in attempting to negotiate the public and private voice, a process emphasized throughout Sheridan's treatises and lectures. Therefore, rather than simply aligning discussions of language acquisition with assimilation, Wilde, Shaw and Friel exemplify, through their works, the power resonant in approaching language acquisition as a process of negotiation and exchange, placing their characters or speakers in a position to subvert the dominant culture through their willing acquisition of the language and culture of the other, a process that ultimately enables each character to not only dismember those "shallow . . . categories" (Kiberd 36) used to define the Irish and British culture but to assert a new linguistic paradigm predicated on the speaker's own internal perspective and goals.

In this sense, Wilde, Shaw and Friel clearly demonstrate the ways in which Sheridan's elocutionary model, while no doubt dependent on the standardization of what Sheridan terms "provincial, rustic, [or] pedantic" (*Lectures* 30) dialects, offers an important lens through which to view contemporary dilemmas over the role of voice (both academic and nonacademic) in the writing classroom, particularly in relation to sincere performativity. In offering a means by which to explore the public and the private self in junction with one another, Sheridan's sincere performer specifically lends an important perspective to contemporary discussions of voice, particularly in the context of the university writing classroom in which finding one's "authentic" voice or self becomes a process not only of negotiation but exchange. Thus, just as Sheridan's model of sincere performativity has been revived and, to an extent, revised by Wilde, Shaw and Friel in order to present a new, more complex image of Irish national identity, contemporary compositionists, in recognizing and revising various divergent views of authenticity and performance in the current writing classroom, also place themselves in the position to acknowledge and approach linguistic and individual "identity . . . [as] seldom straightforward and given, [but] more often a matter of negotiation and exchange" (Kiberd 1). In doing so, contemporary compositionists begin to approach a possible solution to the ongoing debate over the necessary evils of academic discourse, while also confronting the ghost of elocutionary theory and its influence on composition studies.

Specifically, in acknowledging and dispelling those "myths of simple assimilation" (Gilyard 74) that still haunt the discipline, and establishing a more honest

dialogue about the role of authenticity, performativity and identity in the contemporary writing classroom, current composition theorists test the potential/limits of sincere performativity, seizing upon both the positive and negative aspects of academic discourse in order to reestablish a new dialogic medium. In doing so, these theorists encourage students to genuinely explore their diverse voices in order to reach greater academic proficiency as well as a better understanding of themselves as writers. Thus, in considering and reevaluating current debates over the role of academic discourse in current writing classrooms as well as confrontations between writing as a public and private act, American compositionists—like the modern Irish theatre—stand to gain a more complex view of what it means to invest in academic or personal discourse as a dialogic medium, rather than simply viewing such discourses as singular or stable entities, immune to revision by ourselves and our students.

According to Keith Gilyard, such revisions begin with the acknowledgement of voice as an inherently diverse system of codes, a process of “learning lines, mastering gestures, [and] working on all levels to manage impression” (41). However, Gilyard contends that for most students and instructors, such processes remain focused on models of linguistic standardization that, in many instances, deny what Gilyard terms “linguistic pluralism,” a method of instruction by which Standard English is taught, but “in which language differences fail to have deleterious consequences for those whose language has been traditionally frowned upon,” and through which “students will be not only more inclined to see the value of expanding their productive communicative repertoires, but prove rather skillful at accomplishing the task” (73-74). Instead, Gilyard

accuses academicians of following either eradicationism, which argues that “Standard English is the only language variety that has legitimate function within the school” (Gilyard 70), or bidialectalism, which argues that, while one’s home language is “equal to Standard English,” it is ultimately “not quite enough;” rather, Gilyard contends that under bidialectalism, students must “master” Standard English in hopes of keeping “the possibility of upward mobility alive” (74), an argument that, in some ways, echoes Sheridan’s own promotion of Standard English as tied to a kind of civic virtue, the goal being to “make . . . good men, good members of the universal society of mankind” (*British Education* 13) through the promotion of a unified discourse.

For Gilyard, neither of these two options (eradicationism or bidialectalism) accounts or allows for the possibility that students bring a multitude of important voices and perspectives with them to the writing classroom, and certainly neither allows for the possibility that language, not unlike performance, remains “open, unfinished, decentered, [and] liminal” (Schechner 8), even those languages promoted as the “standard” or preferred modes of discourse. Rather, Suresh A. Canagarajah contends that the enforcement of “monolingual pedagogies disable students in contexts of linguistic pluralism” as students are rarely encouraged to invest in language “according to . . . [their] own interests . . . [and] values” (592). In order to avoid rendering discourse irrelevant to students and to, instead, elicit student engagement, Canagarajah argues that instructors must not only incorporate but “value” the “varieties of English” that their students bring with them into the classroom (592). In doing so, instructors allow for the “acquisition of other dialects, including the socially valued dominant varieties”

(Canagarajah 592), thereby encouraging an environment of linguistic negotiation and exchange as opposed to merely promoting language acquisition. For most contemporary scholars, such negotiations begin with the open acknowledgement of writing as both a personal and public act, a process that requires not only individual engagement through critical self-reflection but an open engagement with a variety of audiences (including, but not limited to, academic audiences). Thus, in determining the role of audience, many current composition theorists and pedagogues, not unlike modern Irish writers, seek to investigate and ultimately push against the limitations and possibilities inherent in language acquisition and standardization. In her text, *Voice as Process*, Lizbeth Bryant specifically argues for the recognition of voice as representative of the writer's "social milieu: a constructed subject voice that correlates with the writer's position in his or her world" and which is "constantly constructed and reconstructed as . . . [writers] interact with their environment," showing students that, "in short: voice is a process" (Bryant 6), a point which our classroom environments and projects should ultimately support.

This process, not unlike Wilde, Shaw and Friel's own interpretations of the sincere performer, requires students and educators to re-imagine the landscape of the composition classroom through the close and careful consideration of the ways in which language represents both sincere and performative aspects of the self in addition to investigating current representations of authenticity and performance in composition studies. Unfortunately, rather than taking up "voice as process" (Bryant 72), many composition theorists continue to fall into the habit of polarizing composition classrooms according to divergent views of what constitutes a "natural" or "authentic" voice. In his

text *Telling Writing*, for instance, Ken Macrorie insists that “natural” language exists *prior* to the student’s entrance into the academy and that “Engfish,” a monstrous incarnation of academic discourse, only succeeds in rendering many of our students effectively mute, bound to a discourse that limits rather than expands their communicative abilities (13) and, in this sense, ultimately *diminishes* their authenticity, or sense of self. Thus, for Macrorie, authenticity can only be found in the fostering of voice as an inherently personal and pre-academic entity, suggesting to students the inauthenticity of academic discourse. However, as Jacqueline Jones Royster suggests, this perspective can be just as harmful as the assertion that academic English is paramount to the virtue of the writer, particularly for those students and scholars who have chosen to take on academic discourse *in addition* to their “home” or “natural” discourses.

Having had the authenticity of her own academic voice questioned and ultimately deemed *unnatural* when placed in conjunction with her “natural” voice (619), Royster argues that instructors need “to be awake, awake and listening, awake and operating deliberately on codes of better conduct in the interest of keeping our boundaries fluid, our discourse invigorated with multiple perspectives, and our policies and practices well-tuned toward a clearer respect for human potential and achievement” (622) rather than placing academic and home or “natural” discourses in direct opposition to one another. In this sense, Royster, like Gilyard, admits the need for academic discourse so long as it exists within the framework of those pedagogies that encourage “analysis to operate kaleidoscopically, thereby permitting interpretation to be richly informed by the

converging of dialectical perspectives” (Royster 611). This restructuring of the classroom as a dialogic or “kaleidoscopic” space, also opens up the possibility to engage students in an authentic investigation of the academic discourse in relation to “[their] own interests . . . [and] values” (Canagarajah 592), an essential process for those instructors who might find it difficult to persuade students of the relevancy of university writing courses—a challenge indeed, for as Peter Elbow argues “life is long and college is short” (“Reflections” 136). That is, the academy’s attempts to promote academic discourse (by its nature, a highly specialized discourse) as a means by which to propel students toward civic and professional success beyond the academy often ring false once the student is no longer confined within the walls of the university. Thus, for many students the urge to create a more “fluid” transaction between home discourse and academic discourse seems unnecessary or irrelevant.

Moreover, Elbow asserts that, for most employers, academic discourse inhibits rather than improves the student’s ability to function in a professional environment: “when employers complain that students can’t write, they often mean that students have to unlearn the academic writing they were rewarded for in college” (“Reflections” 136). Yet, Elbow maintains that withholding academic discourse presents a danger as well since students will be required to engage in said discourse “throughout their college career. Many or even most of their teachers will expect them to write in the language of the academy. If we don’t prepare them for these tasks we’ll be shortchanging them” (“Reflections” 135). This begs the question: How do instructors make “academic” writing or the college writing course not only a “fluid” space but relevant beyond the

university? According to Ellen Gardiner, in order to create a fruitful and relevant space in which writing becomes a process of ongoing *negotiation* rather than a matter of mere acquisition, “Students and teachers alike need to acknowledge that the production and consumption of language always involve struggle and conflict” (Gardiner 329), a process which prompts students to consider the construction of self inside and outside the academy.

This occurs, Gardiner argues, “when we learn how to negotiate in a social context like a classroom, when we learn what provokes others' responses to our writing, and how, and whether, finally, we need to address those responses” (329). This suggests that, in providing students with the tools to negotiate the demands of audience alongside their internal goals or outlooks as writers, we prepare them to face a plethora of rhetorical situations outside the rather limited circumference of the university. In this sense, Gardiner seems to encourage a negotiation of cultural/linguistic identity and performance, implying that in order to adequately address questions of linguistic authority and authenticity, students and instructors need to accept language as inherently liminal—that is, as existing in a state of constant flux, dependent on the demands of both writer and audience, a process that once again places English studies in a dialogue with sincere performativity. However, the development of this dialogue remains somewhat stunted, at least for the moment, as theories on how to establish these processes of negotiation remain a point of contention, particularly since the construction of the classroom as a site of negotiation requires instructors and students to consider which voices hold authority and how these voices are to be addressed in the “social context” of

the writing classroom. In this sense, Gardiner brings to the forefront the long contested debate between critics such as Elbow who, coming down on the side of expressionist theories of writing, argues for the promotion of personal/student discourse as an ideal initial site of social engagement, and Bartholomae who, arguing for writing as a social construct, insists that authentic student discourse evolves only out of the immediate recognition, imitation and eventual criticism of the dominant academic culture.

In attempting to address questions of authenticity, authority and voice in the writing classroom, both theorists (Elbow and Bartholomae) and theories (expressionist and social constructivist) struggle to reach an agreement as to how such negotiations should be structured. While Elbow recognizes those cultural influences that affect student discourse prior to and upon their entrance into the academy, he maintains that instructor criticism directed at encouraging students towards professionalization and acculturation (even for the eventual purpose of critiquing certain cultural standards) remains problematic and can inhibit students from “hear[ing] their own writing” (“Responses” 91). In immediately placing student writing in the context of academic or professional writing—that is, in asking students to consider themselves in relation to the cultural and professional demands of others—Elbow suggests that instructors systematically downplay the importance of student (or personal) writing to the development of critical processes such self-reflection and creative engagement, to name a few. In doing so, instructors risk diminishing their students’ agency as writers and succeed in confirming academic discourse as a legitimate system of authority, particularly since, Elbow suggests, “students easily distrust their experience”

(“Responses” 92). Moreover, Elbow argues that, “we do harm if we try to ‘correct’ . . . [students] about their own experience. In short, I want students to hear my comments but still be able to resist or deny them” (“Responses” 92), to, in essence, create a fluency between the writer and the academy. In this sense, Elbow promotes linguistic negotiation as a matter of choice and not necessarily as reliant on direct confrontation, suggesting that students are better able to come to terms with, and accept, criticism and revisions to their writing if they begin to see themselves as authentically inhabiting the position of writer.

Thus, Elbow suggests that in order to foster both the public and private (the academic and the personal) self in conjunction with one another—that is, to foster an ongoing dialogue between what Sheridan might term the “immediate sentiments” of our students’ “own mind[s]” (*Lectures* 70) and the “universal society of mankind” (*British Education* 13)—teachers need to promote writing for the sake of writing, particularly as a means by which to “teach students the principle of discourse variation” (“Reflections” 152); that is, to encourage multiple voices *including but not limited to* the academic voice. Furthermore, Elbow asserts that his “goal is that students should keep writing by choice after the course is over—because of my faith that the process itself of engaging in writing, of trying to find words for one’s thinking and experience and trying them out on others—will ultimately lead to the kind of questing and self-contradiction,” the authentic self/audience engagement, sought by both Elbow and Bartholomae (“Responses” 92).

Defending expressivist pedagogy, Elbow seeks to provide students with a greater amount of control over their writing through the inclusion of personal writing activities

such as “freewriting,” which Elbow defines as a “micro-utopian space” (“Responses” 88) that

frees the writer from planning, from meeting the needs of readers, and from any requirements as to what she should write about or how her writing should end up—for instance, as to topic, meaningfulness, significance, or correctness of convention. Freewriting then is a paradigm of the real and the utopian: an example of how we can use our authority as teachers in our institutional settings to create artificial spaces that can heighten discovery and learning. (“Responses” 89)

Through an emphasis on activities such as freewriting and a deemphasis on instructor comments aimed at “correctness,” Elbow seeks to reestablish authority in the classroom as beginning first and foremost with the writer. In other words, Elbow argues that sincerity or authenticity in writing arises almost exclusively from the writer’s ability to trust and express his or her own experiences and to believe that he or she is, in fact, a writer, without feeling the need to constantly measure his or herself against the demands of the academy or other outside audiences. This is not to say that the role of audience, the necessity of performance, is denied in Elbow’s pedagogy, but rather that, in situating audience in relation to the demands of the writer, Elbow’s instructors allow their first-year writing students to consider and experiment with audience more fully, to act with greater agency, and to determine the place of outside voices in their own narratives. In this way, Elbow suggests that instructors can encourage students to meet the expectations of their audiences via a highly self-reflexive process of negotiation, thereby

centering those moments of linguistic performance more firmly in the space of the individual rather than in the realm of the “universal” (Sheridan, *British Education* 13), a process of sincere performativity predicated on the demands of the self over those of the audience.

Not surprisingly, Bartholomae has much to say in response to this, though, as both he and Elbow acknowledge, the two are not as diametrically opposed as they would initially seem. Rather, Bartholomae readily admits that both he and Elbow view the role of “writer” and the role of “academic” as somewhat oppositional in their goals since the “academic” tends to look backward, investing in the authority, works and ideas of “past” texts and often maintaining a “skeptical” or “critical” view of language, while the “writer” invests in his own “authority . . . without being skeptical or distrustful” (“Responses” 84). However, while Elbow would seem to favor a pedagogical approach predicated on “trust”—encouraging the writer to trust his or herself to the point of “credulity”—Bartholomae promotes what he terms a pedagogy of “mistrust,” suggesting that, in order to bring the student voice to the forefront of the academic classroom, instructors and students must first openly and critically acknowledge the role of the “academic” and how the very construction of such roles have shaped, and continue to shape, our students’ voices as they enter the academy (“Responses” 84). In this way, Bartholomae implies that authority must begin with the acknowledgement and negotiation of “past” voices.

Furthermore, Bartholomae remains skeptical of Elbow’s assertion that personal writing, and an initial lack of instructor-based criticism, can and should be central to

encouraging dialogic negotiations in the composition classroom. Rather, Bartholomae insists that the path to the authentic negotiation, and eventual critique, of cultural and linguistic standards stems from

teaching students to be able to work closely with the ways their writing constructs a relationship with tradition, power and authority—with other people's words. It is here, in the sentences and paragraphs, that I think we can work on cultural politics (where "ownership" becomes a term that works in a writing class). I think it is very important to be able to work with how a student represents or makes use of or revises or intervenes with or takes possession of (say) Adrienne Rich's argument in "When We Dead Awaken." My experience tells me that without instruction, students will feel they have no way of working with that text, nothing to say beyond what Rich has already said. ("Responses" 86-87)

As evident from this passage, Bartholomae advocates for the role of "academic" as a kind of transitional role, placing students in dialogue with others in order to encourage textual "revision" and "intervention" while also suggesting that the student, in relating to the work of established voices like that of Rich, find a means by which to locate and ultimately assert his or her own voice.

In this sense, Bartholomae's pedagogy of "mistrust" encourages the student's initial engagement with the dominant culture, insisting that incoming freshman learn to "do what academics do" in order to come to a better understanding of where they fit into this system ("Writing" 66) and how they might go about revising or challenging it. Thus,

Bartholomae sees a kind of civic virtue in asking students to mimic and engage in those “tradition[s], power[s] and authorit[ies]” (“Writing” 66) that ultimately shape the social construct of the writing classroom, suggesting that, in establishing the value of personal discourse rather than directly confronting the reality of the academy, and other such dominant cultures, teachers risk setting up false expectations, making it difficult for students to see themselves in relation to those historical, social and political realities that shape their lives. For Bartholomae, then, the success of both the public and private self is not predicated purely on the acquisition of standard discourse nor on the systemic promotion of personal discourse so much as on the consistent engagement, analysis and eventual critique of the writer’s voice in conjunction with the textual, linguistic and cultural realities that have already influenced each writer’s self-image. Moreover, Bartholomae asserts that in order to ensure the success of this process, teachers must advocate an acknowledgement of power both in terms of the role of the academy and the role of the teacher in the classroom environment, a reality that, Bartholomae suggests, cannot be ignored, particularly in relation to fostering authentic student engagements with writing and voice (“Writing” 63).

Bartholomae specifically worries that, in ignoring this fact, teachers set up an unrealistic ideology regarding the role of the “writer” that cannot be sustained and that students, no doubt already well aware of the power dynamics at play in the classroom, will be unable or unwilling to accept, arguing that

If our goal is to make a writer aware of the forces at play in the production of knowledge, we need to highlight the classroom as a

substation—as a real space, not as an idealized utopian space. There is no better way to investigate the transmission of power, tradition and authority than by asking students to do what academics do: work with the past, with key texts . . . with other's terms (key terms from Rich, like "patriarchy," for example); . . . with the problems of quotation, citation and paraphrase. ("Writing" 66)

It is interesting to consider Bartholomae's definition of authenticity in relation to Elbow's, for while Elbow admits that there remains an element of both the "real" and "utopian" in the process of expressive (or "free") writing ("Responses" 88) and that authenticity can only be reached by way of situating the writer in an immediate position of authority, Bartholomae contends that the "authentic" or "real" writing environment, as he sees it, can only exist in relation to its acknowledgement and engagement with outside factors such as audience, and that the student, in acquiring an academic voice, must become accustomed to certain academic "rituals and gestures, habits of mind, tricks of persuasion" ("Inventing" 634), a process which asks students to be "consistently and dramatically conscious of . . . forming something to say" ("Inventing" 642) for the benefit of outside audiences. That is, the student must come to terms with the reality of power as it exists outside the "writer." In doing so, Bartholomae hopes that students will be better able to situate their own voices in the context of certain historical moments and critical texts, suggesting, perhaps, that in order "to believe, what he [or she] utters" (Sheridan, *Lectures* 121), the student must first recognize and engage in various dialogues with the thoughts and ideas of others.

In this sense, both pedagogues set up a dialogue between current concerns over academic writing and various aspects of Sheridan's sincere performer. Specifically, in placing the role of "writer" (seen as representative of student agency and personal engagement) in dialogue with the role of the "academic" (a role dependent on the imitation of certain conventions of speech, voice, and grammar as well as on the acknowledgement of audience expectations), Bartholomae and Elbow reestablish Sheridan's often complex notion of sincere performativity, suggesting that in order to see themselves as authentic writers, students must negotiate between the sincere (their own voices, and perspectives) and what is often viewed as the performative (the linguistic and cultural standards that dictate their success in the university and beyond), a process that, like Sheridan's own theories on elocution, requires a close and careful relationship between the public and the private self.

Yet, as Bartholomae and Elbow aptly prove, the incorporation of such dialogues into the writing classroom are often debated on the grounds of where such investigations ought to begin, as well as how teachers, in attempting to place "home" discourse and academic discourse in dialogue with one another, might begin to approach more complex questions such as: "What if the distinction between 'home language' and standardized English . . . is not so clear cut? What about the traditions of mixing, interlanguage, hybrid discourse, and code switching?" (Bean et al 31). In answering these questions, instructors would be well-advised to turn to the works of those authors who, having gained mastery over academic discourse, choose to engage in a series of narratives in order to demonstrate the risks and rewards inherent in placing the personal

in dialogue with the academic, a process which allows writers such as Gloria Anzaldúa, Keith Gilyard and Jacqueline Jones Royster to explore the role of “writer” as both sincere and performative, while also establishing a means by which to confront those questions that continue to complicate debates over the inclusion of personal discourse within the context of the writing classroom.

Specifically, each of the above mentioned writers explores the potential of linguistic hybridity, presenting language as a uniquely personal and subjective experience and asserting the need for a more intent focus on writing as an *expression* of this subjectivity. In doing so, Anzaldúa, Gilyard and Royster offer varying voices and representations of themselves and others in order to play out the realities of linguistic hybridity for a variety of audiences, including those situated in the academy. Experimenting with the fluidity of language, Anzaldúa, Gilyard and Royster each draw attention to moments of linguistic performance through the processes of academic analysis and critical self-reflection, asserting the need for students and academics to move away from polarized views of voice as an expression of either strictly sincere or strictly “appropriated” discourse (Royster 619) in order to embrace voice, and the act of writing, as an exploratory—rather than audience centered—process. In doing so, each writer considers the academic voice in relation to the personal in order to investigate what Bryant terms “voice as process” (72), presenting a series of narratives in conjunction with academic discourse and analysis in order to question certain ongoing presumptions about the nature of authenticity and performance. Through this complex amalgamation between the “writer” and the “academic,” Anzaldúa, Gilyard and Royster

each establish academic discourse as a dialogic medium rather than a static entity, opening up the possibility of linguistic negotiation and exchange for contemporary scholars, teachers, and students.

Such processes are particularly well-exemplified in Anzaldúa's *Borderlands / La Frontera: The New Mestiza*³, Gilyard's *Voices of the Self: A Study of Language Competence*⁴, and Royster's "When the First Voice You Hear is Not Your Own," as all three texts consider how and where such negotiations of voice should occur, and in what ways linguistic negotiation and exchange ultimately allows for both sincerity and performance. At the core of these narratives exists the question of the "self as a dynamic system" (Gilyard 118), or what Royster terms the "subjective position" (611), a position that places emphasis on the intricacies of the individual experience in order to acknowledge voice as multitudinous and capable of growth and expansion; Royster specifically argues that

Subjectivity as a defining value pays attention dynamically to context, ways of knowing, language abilities, and experience, and by doing so it has a consequent potential to deepen, broaden, and enrich our interpretive views in dynamic ways as well. Analytical lenses include the process, results, and impact of negotiating identity, establishing authority, developing strategies for action, carrying forth intent with a particular type of agency, and being compelled by external factors and internal sensibilities to adjust belief and action (or not). (611)

³ Hereafter *Borderlands*

⁴ Hereafter *Voices of the Self*

Thus, in allowing for the subjective position in the classroom environment, the instructor encourages student agency by allowing the student to decide how, when, where and why such negotiations of knowledge, identity, power, and authority should occur. This remains a considerable challenge for instructors, particularly given the demand of learning outcomes, university course descriptions and academic standards. However, Royster does not suggest a rejection of academic discourse or standards so much as she advocates for “fluidity,” arguing the need for “keeping our boundaries fluid, our discourse invigorated with multiple perspectives, and our policies and practices well-tuned toward a clearer respect for human potential and achievement” (622). In this sense, placing discourse under such “analytical lenses” means allowing individual students, scholars and writers the freedom to redefine, and ultimately revise, the meaning of language according to their own terms.

Thus, as Gilyard and Royster suggest, the “subjective” or “dynamic” engagement with language should entail the promotion of discourse varieties (*including* standard or academic English) as equally beneficial to the development of the writer, a process that Gilyard defines as “linguistic pluralism” (73), an “equitable societal arrangement” in which students’ “home” discourse and academic or standard English receive equal billing in the classroom environment (73). Furthermore, under this paradigm, instructors are asked to acknowledge that it is the writer or speaker, and not the academy, who must negotiate voice on the basis of his or her own needs, whether those needs are driven by the demands of academic or professional audiences, or by the individual’s “immediate sentiments” (Sheridan, *Lectures* 70). Kurt Spellmeyer specifically suggests that if

discourse represents “an act of self-fashioning,” teachers, in “promoting the transposition of knowledge, the transposition of worlds, across established boundaries . . . encourage in our students’ writing the same ‘mastery of the self’ Foucault himself pursued, a practice ‘grounded in liberty’ and not in an ethic of alienated imitation” (72). Yet, as Royster and Gilyard make clear, the student’s engagement with the standard or academic discourse should remain a strategic one, predicated on the student’s own “ways of knowing” (Royster 611).

Thus, rather than assuming what might benefit the student writer, thereby situating the writer in the objective position, Royster and Gilyard seem to encourage teachers and students to engage in an exploration of how and why language acquisition is important to each individual writer as well as what “ways of knowing, language abilities, and experiences” (Royster 611) have shaped each students’ educational goals, the point being to encourage “teachers [to] stop assuming that students are inferior and/or have nothing to contribute to the educative process other than to sit and absorb” (Gilyard 165) and instead listen and engage with the “ways of knowing” that students bring into the classroom. According to Canagarajah, this task cannot be accomplished without an emphasis on the student’s self-interest (592) or without the acknowledgement that, in any linguistic engagement, “there is always the tension between stability and change, dominant usage and emergent conventions, and sociolect and idiolect in any language. Rather than being treated as a sign of a lack of proficiency, such negotiation should be treated as a mark of independence and critical writing” (Canagarajah 611). In this sense, instructors should refrain from pushing too hard for linguistic

reconciliation—that is, for a quick and idealized notion of negotiation as a simple marriage of the personal and academic—and should instead acknowledge and work with these moments of conflict which so often characterize our writing classrooms.

In order to recognize, and to a degree foster, these moments of conflict, Anzaldúa, Gilyard and Royster present “traditions of mixing, interlanguage, hybrid discourse, and code switching” as a solution to closing the seemingly unconquerable gap between “‘home language’ and standardized English” (Bean et al 31) while also demonstrating the potential of linguistic hybridity. Through the presentation of language as a uniquely personal and subjective experience, all three writers demonstrate the power and effect of the subject position on the development of the individual voice, a process which, as Anzaldúa demonstrates, is best exemplified through the incorporation of multiple languages, and vernaculars into student writing, a process which, she implies, allows the individual to explore aspects of the self for both reflexive and communicative purposes. Specifically, Anzaldúa remains adamant that “as long as I have to accommodate the English speakers rather than having them accommodate me, my tongue will be illegitimate” (81). In response to such limitations, Anzaldúa paints a vivid picture of the ways in which the inclusion of multiple voices, languages, and perspectives not only illuminates aspects of the self but calls attention to those paradigms which seek to stifle or restrict the writer’s linguistic power and influence.

Anzaldúa asserts that the individual must be free to explore and “code switch without having always to translate” (81), a process which both she and, to an extent, Gilyard explore in *Borderlands* and *Voices of the Self*, placing academic, or standard,

English in dialogue with other vernaculars previously deemed unsuitable by various educational institutions. Indeed, both writers define themselves as inherently liminal, using language to revise and challenge those borders which have formerly defined their “home” vernaculars as illegitimate. For Anzaldúa, not unlike Elbow, combatting such prejudices involves placing authority in the hands of the writer, allowing voice to become as process of constant linguistic negotiation, a fluidity that allows different languages and vernaculars to collide according to the needs of the speaker or writer, rather than focusing exclusively on audience. Writing from the subject position, Anzaldúa argues that

The switching of “codes” in this book from English to Castilian Spanish to the North Mexican dialect to Tex-Mex to a sprinkling of Nahuatl to a mixture of all of these, reflects my language, a new language—the language of the Borderlands. There, at the junction of cultures, languages cross-pollinate and are revitalized; they die and are born. Presently this infant language, this bastard language, Chicano Spanish, is not approved by any society. But we Chicanos no longer feel that we need to beg entrance, that we need always to make the first overture—to translate Anglos, Mexicans and Latinos, apology blurting out of our mouths with every step. Today we ask to be met halfway. (19)

In refusing to translate her experience for a strictly English speaking audience, Anzaldúa implies that the process of code switching, of moving freely between linguistic identities, is an inherently personal, and at times untranslatable, experience, and that

often, despite our best efforts, our experiences remain too personal to be translated according to the demands of others. Rather, by encouraging students to code switch, to negotiate between a variety of voices and languages, instructors encourage sincere performativity as an exploratory process—that is, we encourage students to consider how and when they wish to meet the demands of audience, a process that allows linguistic performance to become a choice rather than a necessary evil enforced by course curriculum and learning goals. Otherwise, teachers risk labeling certain voices as more appropriate than others, alienating and, as Anzaldúa puts, delegitimizing our students.

Along these lines, teachers must accept academic discourse as not only part of this process, but as a dialogic medium, capable of being both appropriated, revised, and at times rejected by the writer or speaker. This process is well exemplified in Gilyard's *Voices of the Self*, a text in which Gilyard situates himself in the positions of both “writer” and “academic,” placing the two roles in direct conversation with one another in order to suggest the importance of encouraging pluralism as well as the dangers inherent in dividing up or parceling out one's voice in order to meet the demands or expectations of others. In toggling between his academic investigation of the ways in which code switching has been addressed in classrooms and his personal narrative in which he explores the oft rejected “Black English” (9) vernacular, Gilyard mirrors, in a sense, Bartholomae's argument for a pedagogy of “mistrust,” taking up, in part, the language, analytical processes, and arguments of the dominant culture in order to challenge and ultimately reject the “myths of simple assimilation” (74). In doing so, Gilyard argues

that “despite attempts to ‘correct’ children’s grammar, children themselves for the most part *choose* which language varieties they will speak” (114), and thus, in promoting standard discourse, instructors need to acknowledge the agency of students in the successful usage and management of that language, particularly since, Gilyard implies, success is ultimately measured by the students’ underlying goals, not the academy’s.

In order to demonstrate his argument, Gilyard presents a moment in which he chose to construct a new linguistic identity, a role which allowed him to gain a greater degree of agency in the face of a new academic environment:

“What shall we call you, young Master Gilyard? Shall we call you Raymond or Keith?” Nobody had ever called me Raymond before. Uptown it was always Keith or Keithy or Little Gil. Raymond was like a fifth wheel. A spare. And that’s what I decided to make these people call me. *They cannot meet Keith now. I will put someone else together for them and he will be their classmate until further notice. That will be the first step in this particular survival plan.* Of course it wasn’t thought out in those specific terms, but the instinct and action were there. And from that day on, through all my years in public school, all White folks had to call me Raymond. (43)

On the one hand, Gilyard asserts that this decision allowed him to become his “own best guardian of the self” (109), asserting his identity as Raymond and thereby controlling, as much as possible, the academic environment’s influence on Keith. Specifically, in studying the role of student, and recognizing the expectations being placed on “Keith,”

Gilyard establishes a new voice or identity in order to meet, and in some ways challenge, the demands of the academy on his personal voice. In this sense, Gilyard draws attention to the power of what Anzaldúa labels “seeing and being seen” (64), a process which acknowledges the values inherent in both the subjective and the objective gaze, in recognizing the self as both sincere (situated in the subject position) and performative (an object of scrutiny and the objective analysis of others). Thus, Raymond becomes a kind of characterization, a performance that Keith eventually adapts as a sincere aspect of himself.

However, while Gilyard asserts a certain degree of agency by taking up the role of Raymond, he maintains that such strong divisions of the self cannot be maintained for too long a time, as this process eventually begins to wear on both Keith and Raymond: “I was torn between institutions, between value systems. At times the tug of school was greater, therefore the 90.2 average. On other occasions the streets were a more powerful lure, thus the heroin and the 40 in English . . . I saw no middle ground or, more accurately, no total ground on which anomalies like me could gather” (160). Thus, as Gilyard’s narrative/academic investigation aptly proves, linguistic performance cannot and should not insist upon the separation of self according to audience expectations, but rather needs to insist upon “performance . . . [as] a paradigm of process” (Schechner 8) in which the speaker or student comes to recognize his or her various voices and, instead of striving towards creating different roles or personas in relation to those voices, attempts to bring those voices into dialogue with one another through moments of critical self-reflection and audience analysis.

This occurs, Bryant asserts, through “a construction zone in which voices are negotiated and combined. Voices do more than contact each other: they interact, reject, and combine. As new combinations of voices are built, the web of voices grows deeper and broader, reflecting the voices and discourse systems the writer has engaged” (13). Such processes also enable the academic community to reevaluate its tendencies to promote authenticity as predicated on a single linguistic paradigm, a myth which Anzaldúa, Gilyard and Royster each attempt to dispel through a direct emphasis on pluralism as an equalizing pedagogical practice rather than basing classroom discourse, either intentionally or unintentionally, on preconceived notions of what constitutes authenticity or performance. They recommend that, in taking up this communicative strategy, instructors need to be aware of the fact that the linguistic pendulum swings both ways, so to speak, and that in delegitimizing academic discourse, teachers also run the risk to labeling our students’ attempts at such linguistic negotiations inauthentic.

In her article “When the First Voice You Hear is Not Your Own,” Royster raises concerns about the tendency of the academy to assume that authenticity results from the rediscovery or establishment of one voice, or from the strict promotion of one cultural reality or identity, an unrealistic perspective that she has experienced first hand:

One case in point occurred after a presentation in which I had glossed a scene in a novel that required cultural understanding. When the characters spoke in the scene, I rendered their voices, speaking and explaining, speaking and explaining, trying to translate the experience . . . One very well-intentioned response to what I did that day was, “How wonderful it

was that you were willing to share with us your ‘authentic’ voice!” I said, “My ‘authentic’ voice?” She said, “Oh yes! I’ve never heard you talk like that, you know, so relaxed. I mean, you’re usually great, but, this was really great! You weren’t so formal. You didn’t have to speak in appropriated academic language. You sounded ‘natural.’” (618-19)

Through this scene, Royster, like Anzaldúa and Gilyard, questions the tendency of the academy to categorize discourse according to certain imagined paradigms of authenticity. Rather, as Royster aptly demonstrates, contemporary theorists also risk delegitimizing students or colleagues when they insist too strongly on the personal voice as the only authentic or sincere representation of the speaker, a perspective which *also* limits the potentiality or “fluidity” of voice, once again denying the speaker’s agency in taking on certain linguistic standards or varieties.

In all three narratives, Anzaldúa, Gilyard and Royster seem to advocate “transformation in theory and practice . . . so that they include voicing as a phenomenon that is constructed and expressed visually and orally, *and* as a phenomenon that has import also in being a thing heard, perceived, and reconstructed” (Royster 612). In denying these processes, Royster argues, we risk placing discourse in the realm of objectivity, settling upon it our own coda of authenticity and performance rather than allowing students and colleagues the opportunity to express and render their own perspectives on what it means to speak in an authentic voice. Along these lines, Royster, considering the works of bell hooks, “find[s] it ‘a necessary aspect of self-affirmation not to feel compelled to choose one voice over another, not to claim one as more

authentic, but rather to construct social realities that celebrate, acknowledge, and affirm differences, variety” (hooks qtd. in Royster 619); rather, “like hooks,” Royster pronounces voice to be a fluid experience: “I claim all my voices as my own very much authentic voices” (619), rejecting views of authenticity as static and constant and instead defining authentic voice in the realm of sincere performativity, suggesting, not unlike Sheridan, that authentic voice results from each speaker’s individual analysis of their own emotional responses, predispositions and perspectives as well as his or her consideration and employment of audience expectations and demands.

In placing themselves in the subject position of the writer, Anzaldúa, Gilyard and Royster mirror and to an extent revive sincere performativity as a process of negotiation, while also suggesting the performative nature of the academy in general. Indeed, while these narratives seek to represent the personal experiences of each author, there remains a clear focus on the academic setting, allowing Anzaldúa, Gilyard and Royster to play out the process of linguistic assimilation and negotiation for both academic and nonacademic audiences, a move that in many ways mirrors Wilde, Shaw and Friel’s attempts to restage Ireland’s linguistic assimilation for both British and Irish audiences. In doing so, Anzaldúa, Gilyard and Royster, like Wilde, Shaw and Friel, become better able to direct and ultimately challenge those academic/cultural standards that have shaped their own views of authenticity and performance.

Through performances embodying various discourses, scenes and dialogues, all three writers impress upon readers the performative aspects of language acquisition while also arguing for the authenticity of “voice as process,” a linguistic model that

mirrors Mikhail Bakhtin's view of language as a "living utterance, [that] having taken meaning and shape at a particular historical moment in a socially specific environment, cannot fail to brush up against thousands of living dialogic threads, woven by socio-ideological consciousness around the given object of an utterance; it cannot fail to become an active participant in social dialogue" (276). In this sense, Anzaldúa, Gilyard, and Royster contend that authenticity results not from having mastered, or rediscovered (as Macrorie implies) any one linguistic paradigm but rather from the acknowledgement that "the linguistics of selfhood" (Gilyard 118) are constructed through an understanding of voice as predicated on our ability to "exchange perspectives, negotiate meaning, and create understanding" (Royster 620). Mastery of the academic standard, then, is only as useful as one's ability to question and ultimately subvert the demands of the dominant culture.

Indeed, as Anzaldúa, Gilyard and Royster make clear, linguistic negotiations insist on the unstable, the transformative aspects of communication and exchange. Therefore, such investigations rarely produce absolute or simple answers to the questions/issues raised by Bartholomae and Elbow, but rather insist on the willingness of both the speaker and audience to engage in a "transformation in theory and practice . . . so that they include voicing as a phenomenon that is constructed and expressed visually and orally, *and* as a phenomenon that has import also in being a thing heard, perceived, and reconstructed" (Royster 612). Thus, in moving forward with investigations of voice, scholars may need to reconsider the relevancy of debates over how and when to include

personal writing and instead contemplate the incorporation/introduction of all writing as both a public and private act.

Specifically, in approaching classroom discourse from the perspective of sincere performativity, that is, in acknowledging that communication, whether through speech or writing, is necessarily a sincerely (driven by individual needs, emotions, etc.) performative (driven by the demands and expectations of audience) act instructors come closer to encouraging writing as both an expressive and professional or civic process. This may mean a reevaluation of formal assignments to allow for the inclusion of a variety of languages and vernaculars. It may also require the instructor to trust the student's discretion in translating experiences. However, in presenting writing as inherently dialogic, instructors open the class up to an important dialogue about the nature of voice and writing as ongoing processes of individual development, including, but no longer limited to, development in an academic and professional context.

This means acknowledging, and ultimately exploring, those moments of performance that occur daily in our classrooms in order to facilitate discussions of the ways in which linguistic negotiation and exchange can often raise feelings of inauthenticity and performance. While these topics may seem taboo, or uncomfortable at times, the simple fact of the matter is that these issues continually arise in our day to day interactions with students, no matter how much we might choose to shy away from them. Indeed, whether we would care to admit it or not, performance and imitation are very much alive in the academic classroom, a fact which teachers must learn to address on a regular basis as students attempt to establish their own voices in conjunction with

those of the general academy and their specific personal, professional and academic goals.

In my own classroom, such negotiations often occur in the context of student led discussions, an activity in which groups of 2-3 students are asked to lead the class on that day's assigned readings. Though students are strongly encouraged to introduce the day's reading through a creative project or presentation of their choosing (group activities, games, debates and other activities that reflect their own vision for the course are strongly encouraged) these presentations, at least at the start, often reflect the classroom model; that is, what I have modeled previously in class. If the course has focused heavily on group work prior to the first presentation, the presenters are generally more inclined to put the class into groups. If I have focused on freewriting, the student led discussions often begin with a free-write, and so on. In this sense, imitation becomes a kind of safe zone: students know I value these activities and so model back what they believe I wish to see. However, in the process of imitation, many students, as the class becomes more comfortable with myself and with each other, will begin to introduce new activities, sometimes offhandedly critiquing the course in the process if they feel I have been remiss in encouraging class interaction.

These moments of imitation and revision occur daily in our classrooms, and present important teachable moments in which to discuss learning as a process of negotiation and exchange. Whether we recognize the influence of Sheridan's sincere performer in this debate or not, our students are often well aware of the role that sincere performativity plays in their acculturation to the academy, as they attempt to navigate

and at times challenge the standards impressed upon them in their writing classrooms. In openly acknowledging such processes with the intent to explore writing as an act of linguistic negotiation and in asking students to reflect upon and ultimately come to some conclusions about their own writing processes and the construction of individual voice, teachers begin to dispel polarized views of performance and authenticity in order to “support students as they struggle to combine and construct new voices—the hybrid voices, the *mestizos* that form on the larger cultural and ethnic borders as well as on the more obscure borders in classroom where the voices of home, community, and school meet” (Bryant 11). In doing so, we begin to acknowledge the importance of language as both a sincere and performative act, insisting that in the simple exploration of writing as a series of negotiations between the writer’s voices, thoughts and feelings and his or her various audiences, students approach not necessarily a *reconciliation* of voices, but rather an uneasy, though possibly authentic, negotiation of self.

A consideration of Sheridan’s sincere performer can enable contemporary compositionists to reconstruct the writing classroom on the basis of “voice as process,” rather than on the theory that the acquisition of voice presents either a threat or a complete reconfiguration of the self. Therefore, while it is tempting to define elocutionary theory under terms such as “assimilation” and “theatricality,” contemporary theorists and scholars, in arguing for voice as a public and private entity, reinvigorate Sheridan’s sincere performer, suggesting the fluidity of the elocutionary model, and its possible role in contemporary English studies.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION: A CASE FOR THE LIMITED REVIVAL OF
SINCERE PERFORMATIVITY

By investigating the use of sincere performativity in modern Irish theatre and current composition studies, this thesis has sought to analyze the limiting and liberating aspects of theatricality and performance as they relate to discussions of writing and voice, suggesting that while theatricality remains largely audience centered, relying on “stylistic ornaments,” the strict and unnatural imitation of another speaker’s personal expressions, and a rejection of one’s natural oratorical skills (Sheridan, *Lectures* 54), performance represents, according to Sheridan, a process of reflexivity. This process occurs when the speaker, while considering the social demands of the audience, places emphasis on his or her own internal demands in order to present a sincere representation of self, recognizing the fact that while the “chief end of all public speakers is to persuade,” the focus of the speaker should remain on renouncing all “evident marks of affection, or art” (Sheridan, *Lectures* 121) so that he or she may present a sincere representation of self to his or her audience. Thus, the purpose of this thesis has been, to a large degree, to reevaluate the nature of performance in relation to voice and the construction of linguistic identity.

Sheridan’s theory of sincere performativity has a crucial role to play in this discussion. In placing the internal demands of the speaker in conjunction with, and at times above, the demands of audience, Sheridan specifically suggests that the process of

linguistic performance remains, first and foremost, a process of critical self-reflection, negotiation and exchange, placing the speaker or writer in a position to construct and ultimately revise his or her voice based on the acquisition of new languages or linguistic standards as well as on his or her personal “sentiments” (*Lectures* 70) or experiences. Therefore, Sheridan presents performance not as an act of imitation but rather insists upon the speaker’s ability to assess and negotiate his or her own emotions in order to connect with audiences on a sincere, or authentic level. Thus, in considering the ways in which sincere performativity allows for the negotiation and revision of various linguistic paradigms through the process of critical self-reflection, this thesis has sought to place eighteenth century elocutionary theory in dialogue with contemporary debates over the nature of authenticity and linguistic identity in order to demonstrate the ways in which language acquisition can represent a sincerely performative act while also considering the ways in which sincere performativity plays an essential role in helping writers navigate and ultimately revise various linguistic paradigms.

An investigation of modern Irish drama provided an important insight into this process; specifically, Wilde, Shaw and Friel, writing at various moments of social and political upheaval in Ireland, demonstrate the versatility of Sheridan’s sincere performer, particularly in relation to moments of linguistic negotiation, placing England and Ireland in a complex dialogic relationship, and arguing for such an engagement as not only beneficial but necessary to establishing an Irish national identity. In doing so, each playwright revives and revises sincere performativity for a modern audience, restaging Sheridan’s elocutionary theory and asserting its potential for later writers and theorists

faced with similar moments of linguistic negotiation and exchange. Thus, as a case study, modern Irish drama presents an important example of the ways in which sincere performativity has been successfully utilized to encourage a more pluralistic view of language and linguistic identity, allowing contemporary scholars and theorists to consider the relevancy of sincere performativity in their own classrooms and pedagogies.

Indeed, in considering the works of Anzaldúa, Gilyard and Royster, it becomes evident that the incorporation of sincere performativity into the writing classroom depends largely on the instructor's willingness to acknowledge and accept voice as multitudinous since sincere performativity, as modeled by Wilde, Shaw and Friel, involves a complex dialogic exchange between a variety of voices, languages and cultural/societal perspectives. Sincere performativity as a pedagogical practice specifically asks instructors and academicians to give students the authority to incorporate, revise, and possibly reject, various languages based on their own views of what constitutes an authentic expression of self, a process that may entail the incorporation of various vernaculars into informal and formal writing assignments. More importantly, however, the incorporation of various voices into the writing classroom should be done with the understanding of language as not only unstable, and therefore subject to influence and revision but as a series of personal and public acts. Each approach, aside from encouraging a pluralistic classroom environment, reestablishes certain tenets of sincere performativity, for in teaching writing as a public/private act, instructors are forced to address performance as an intrinsic part of the writing process, considering audience and the role of the academic in this light. Such approaches should

especially focus on those moments when students choose to take on the role of the academic and should, therefore, encourage each student to analyze and ultimately reflect upon their personal motivations for acting the part.

In this sense, the construction of voice requires a conscious negotiation between what Elbow and Bartholomae term the “writer” and the “academic,” a process which ultimately necessitates the questioning of terms, a redefinition of what it means to write for the academy, and a serious investigation into the academic, professional and personal goals of each student since, in placing such linguistic authority into the hands of each writer, instructors enable students to redefine the academic audience, and their own academic voices, in accordance with the student’s professional, personal and academic goals. In order to accomplish this task, Bryant lays out a series of steps for the instructor, suggesting that the recognition of “voice as process” (72), or linguistic performance, in the writing classroom requires first and foremost that instructors

study the development of your own voice to understand how you have combined and rejected voices over your academic career to construct your subject voice. What factors have influenced you? Understanding your own conflicts and struggles helps you support your students as they struggle through their voice conflicts. *Second*, understand how and why voice is a process of construction. What research and theoretical underpinnings support the view of voice as process? And *third*, support students in their process of voice construction to experiment and take

risks. Provide an environment and activities that encourage students to navigate, negotiate, reject, and combine voices. (72)

In this sense, Bryant reminds instructors of their own sincere performativity, placing teachers in a similar position to that of their students and asking them to reflect on both their personal experience in the academic setting, and the demands of their present audience: their students. In doing so, instructors have the potential to encourage a more honest investigation of “voice as process,” while also demonstrating for students sincere performativity as a legitimate, and possibly beneficial, process of linguistic negotiation and exchange.

Furthermore, through this process, instructors come closer to acknowledging the reality of performance in the writing classroom, particularly in relation to the acquisition of academic discourse. That is, in asking students to take on the role of the academic or writer, we acknowledge that for many of our students these may be unfamiliar roles, each of which often requires a certain degree of enactment or imitation before the student can move onto the processes of negotiation and exchange. This process may, in turn, stir up feelings of inauthenticity among our students, a fact which instructors must be ready to address honestly and openly. As Gilyard suggests, this can be accomplished by ensuring that these processes of imitation and language acquisition do not occur at the expense of the student’s personal discourse; nor he suggests, should academic discourse be taught on the basis of exclusion, or professional advancement. Rather, Gilyard, in promoting a pluralistic classroom, suggests that in order to truly engage in “the self as a dynamic system,” instructors need to acknowledge “the interrelationships among school

and street cultures” (118). In openly addressing such relationships, Gilyard suggests that instructors ultimately succeed in demystifying the mechanics of language acquisition and, instead, present language as a fluid entity, allowing students and teachers to participate in a more open discussion of what it means to authentically engage in linguistic performance.

Therefore, in reconsidering the role of elocution, particularly in relation to sincere performativity, instructors can begin to move beyond polarized debates over the validity of standardized English, and instead move towards the redefinition of linguistic performance as a process of reflexivity, negotiation and exchange rather than a process of mere assimilation. Read in this light, Sheridan’s elocutionary theory provides a means by which to reassess the complexities of linguistic assimilation and agency, allowing instructors and students to reevaluate prevailing notions of authenticity and performance in order to reach a more open and honest assessment of “voice as process.” This investigation can and should be continued through a deeper exploration of the ways in which literature, rhetoric and composition intersect within the discipline. As this thesis demonstrates, there are various literary texts which may aid in fostering such discussions and which offer an intriguing model of these conflicts, allowing instructors and students to explore various topics through the processes of analysis, dialogic exchange and critical self-reflection. During the course of my own research, I have, for example, become aware of dramatists such as Luis Valdez, August Wilson, Leroi Jones (Amiri Baraka), and Suzanne Lori-Parks, authors who may have much to contribute to discussions of what constitutes “authentic” voice, and which may add a very important

dynamic to these debates as they exist within the writing classroom. Therefore, a further study of these works alongside investigations of sincere performativity and its application through various historical moments, may, in fact, enable current composition scholars, teachers and students to reconsider the role of authenticity and performance within the context of the writing classroom, giving each a means by which to address writing as an expression of both the public and private self.

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of the present defective System of Education. With a attempt to shew, that a

revival of the art of speaking, and the study of our own language, might

contribute, in great measure, to the cure of those evils. In three parts. I. Of the

use of these studies to religion, and morality; as also, to the support of the British

constitution. II. Their absolute necessity in order to refine, ascertain, and fix the

English language. III. Their use in the cultivation of the imitative arts: shewing, that were the study of oratory made a necessary branch of the education of youth; poetry, musick, painting, and sculpture, might arrive at as high a pitch of perfection in England, as ever they did in Athens or Rome. By Sheridan. London, 1756. *Eighteenth Century Collections Online*. Gale. Texas A&M University College Station, 1 Oct. 2010. Web. 6 July 2011.

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